FEBRUARY 1st ISSUE, 1932
VOL. LXXXI No. 4

ADVENTURE

25 Cents

25c
Published Twice A Month

Adventure

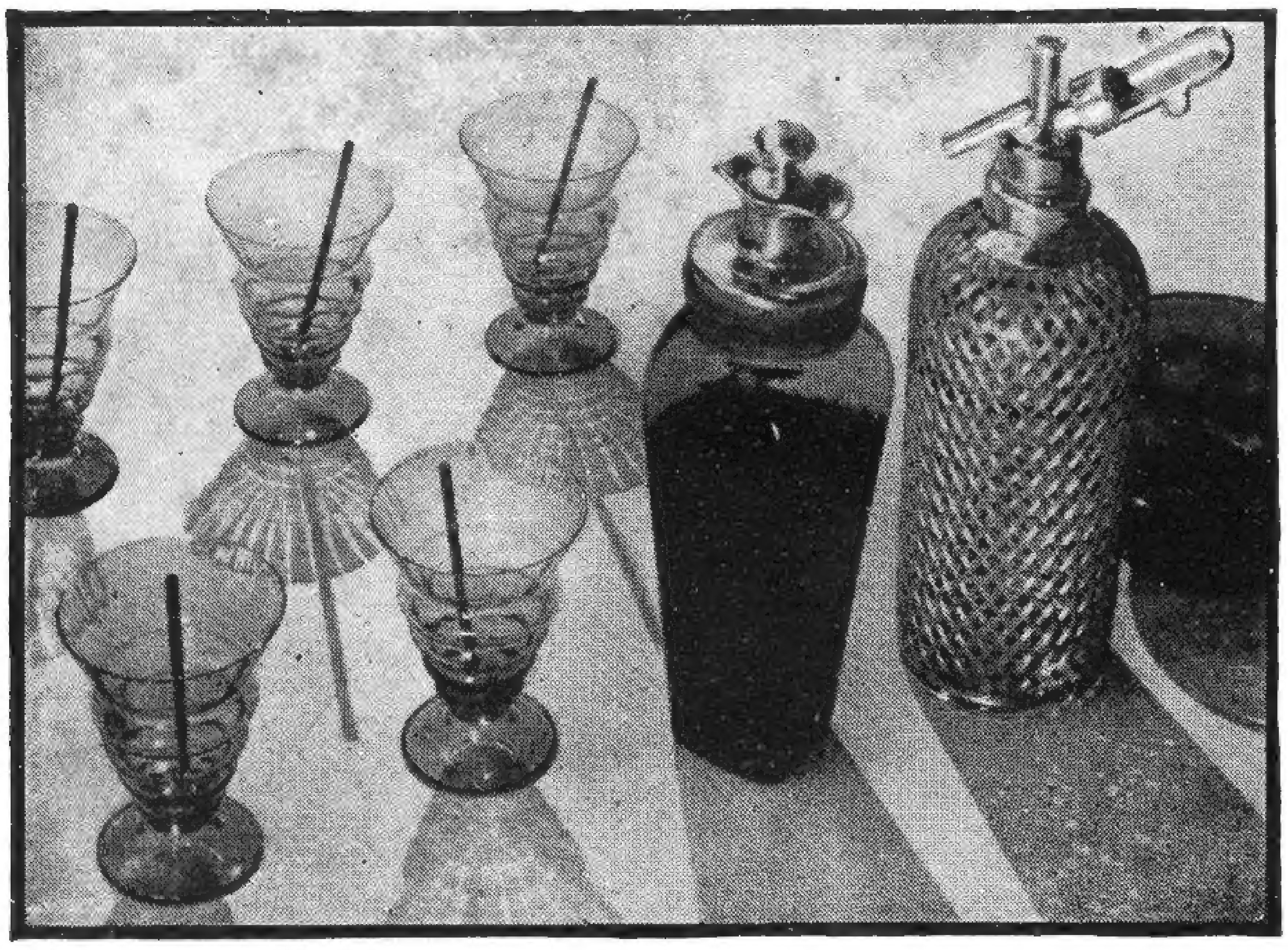
February 1st

HUBERT ROGERS '31

COMMANDER ELLSBERG · STANLEY VESTAL · GEORGES SURDEZ
H. BEDFORD-JONES · M. WHEELER-NICHOLSON · *and others*

This advertisement is for

Bachelors



and all men temporarily abandoned by wives, and mothers, sisters and fond aunts. Advertisements for married men on page 2.

If your memory falters—just when you have the crowd gathered for a Silver Fizz or a Horse's Neck . . . . Don't despair, there *is* a cure! Next to the "makings" keep a copy of this booklet with all the recipes—in best prohibition style—but need we say more to an ADVENTURE fan? Send today for the 125 thirst-quenching ideas in No. 43 . . BEVERAGES FOR PARTIES 10c

YOU'LL WANT THESE BOOKLETS, TOO!

FOOD

63. . HORS D'OEUVRES AND CANAPES 25c

GRILLED STEAK. . You can cook it, but do you know all the other good things to eat out of doors? Send for 35. . . . PICNICS AND PORCH MEALS 25c

CAN YOU CARVE? Many a man who sniffs danger with the relish of a bloodhound, turns pale when he sees a tame chicken on a platter. Now, sir, it's time to learn how to handle a knife indoors. Send for 34. . DELINEATOR COOK BOOK $2.65

FUN

21. . FIVE WAYS TO TELL FORTUNES. 15c

46. . SECRETS OF HANDWRITING. 10c

27. . WHAT'S IN YOUR NAME. 15c

51. . GAMES FOR GROWN UPS. 15c

54. . FUN AND LAUGHTER PARTIES. 25c

55. . PARTIES FOR ALL OCCASIONS 25c

25. . FIVE MINUTE PLAYS. 25c

67. . TEN MINUTE PLAYS. 25c

68. . CHILDREN'S PLAYS. 25c

MORE FOOD

48. . DELINEATOR RECIPES. 25c
With the recipe for this mouth-watering chocolate cake.

49. . SECOND DELINEATOR RECIPES. 25c
With a johnny-cake a man can make.

50. . THIRD DELINEATOR RECIPES. 25c
How to make a grand chocolate fudge.

26. . PARTY SANDWICHES 10c
82 ideas, sweet, tart, tidbits or luncheon sandwiches.

41. . SALADS FOR ALL OCCASIONS. 10c

60. . HOW TO ENTERTAIN SIX AND EIGHT. . 25c
In case you want to try your hand at a real dinner, a little late supper, or a luncheon.

COUPON

DELINEATOR INSTITUTE
161 Sixth Ave., N. Y.

Please send me numbers encircled:
I enclose stamps ☐ money order ☐ check ☐ for. .

21. . 15c	34 $2.50	46. . 10c	51. . 15c	60. . 25c
25. . 25c	35. . 25c	48. . 25c	54. . 25c	67. . 25c
26. . 10c	41. . 10c	49. . 25c	55. . 25c	68. . 25c
27. . 15c	43. . 10c	50. . 25c	All for $6.00	

Name. . . . .

Address. . . . .

City. . . . . State. . . . . He says to hurry!

Let me pay you up to $75 A WEEK

Lowest Prices in 24 Years

A daily income of quick, cash commissions in advance by representing me in your locality. My prices are sensationally reduced on all-wool, tailored-to-measure suits. **Amazing values**—$19.50—24.50—29.50—make orders easy to take. 100% co-operation, liberal bonus to producers who show my **big selling**, well known line. No special experience required. Big **FREE** outfit of large swatches puts you in business. Write now. **W. Z. GIBSON, Inc.**
500 Throop St., Dept. P-403, Chicago

SPRINGFIELD RIFLE, MODEL 1903

Cal. 30, 8¾ pounds, 43 inches long, 24 inch barrel, assembled and refinished, without bayonet at reduced price, $16.50. Ball cartridges $3.50 per 100. Illustrated catalog 1931, 364 pages, Army-Navy equipment, mailed for 50 cents. NEW circular for 2c stamp. Established 1865.
FRANCIS BANNERMAN SONS, 501 B'way, N. Y. City

EARN MONEY AT HOME

YOU can make $15 to $50 weekly, in spare or full time at home coloring photographs. No experience needed. No canvassing. We instruct you by our new simple Photo-Color process and supply you with work. Write for particulars and Free Book to-day.
The IRVING-VANCE COMPANY Ltd.
364 Hart Building, Toronto, Can.

SONG POEM OR MELODY WRITERS!
I offer you an outstanding bona fide proposition. Write today and be thoroughly convinced.
Ray Hibbeler, D36, 2104 Keystone Ave., Chicago

WANTED—OLD GOLD, DIAMONDS
Cash for old gold teeth—old or broken jewelry—antiques—watches—diamonds—silver. Cash by return mail. Goods returned in 10 days if you're not satisfied.
OHIO SMELTING CO., 315-C, Hippodrome Bldg., Cleveland, Ohio

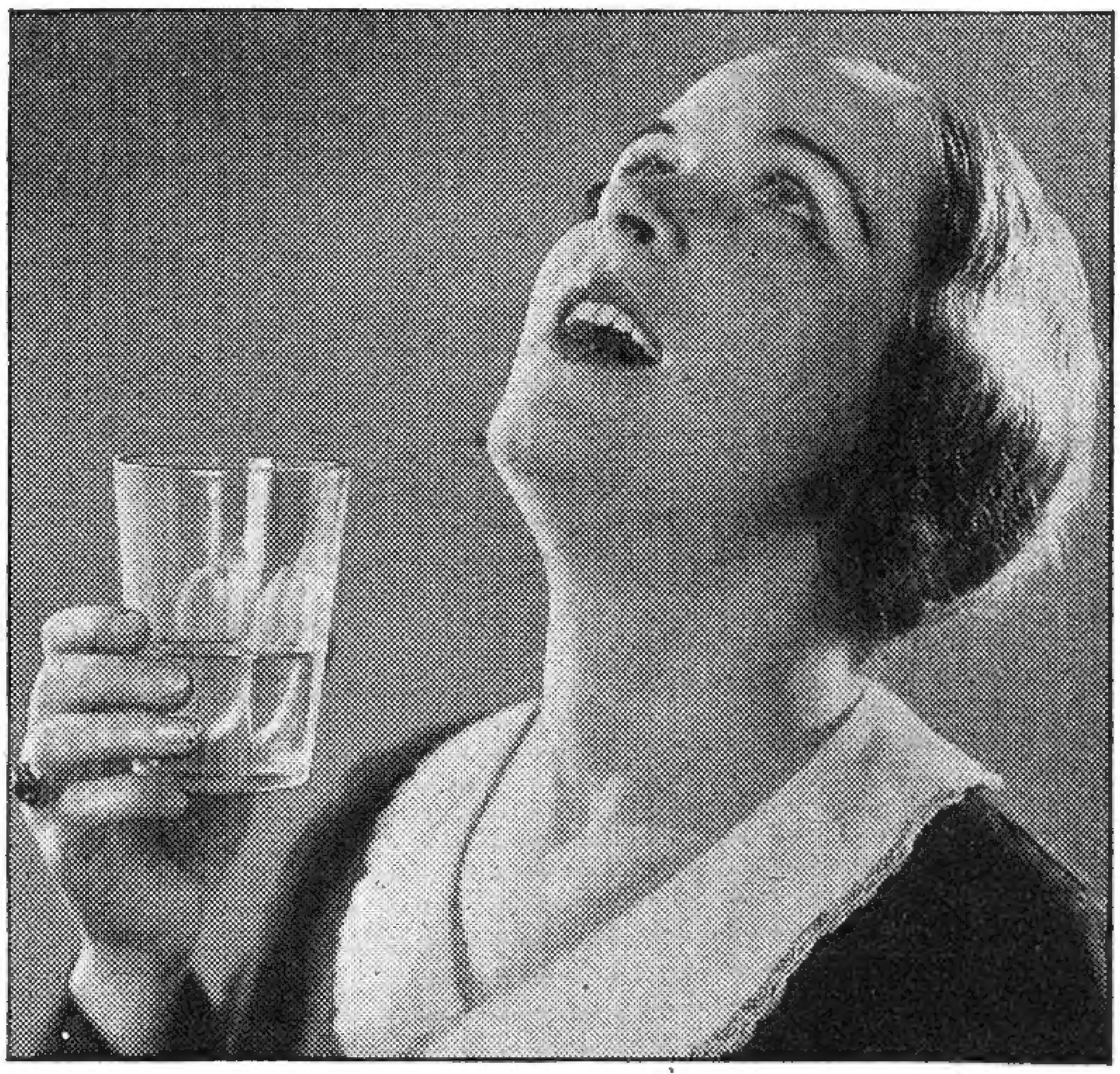
MAKE $10,000 A year raising Rex rabbits for us. We pay up to $12.00 each for all you raise. Send 25c for full information and contract, everything explained. Send at once and find out about this big proposition we have to offer you.
THE EASTERN RABBITRY
Route 1, Box 274 New Freedom, Pa.

ATHLETE'S FOOT
ATH-A-LENE A NEW POWDER that soon heals the most persistent and aggravated cases. Marvelous for sore, itching feet. Complete satisfaction or money back.
AT ALL DRUG STORES—or send 50c for a package today.
ATH-A-LENE LABORATORIES, Dept. 5, Chicago, Ill.

CORNS—SORE TOES
—relieved in ONE minute by these thin, healing, safe pads! They remove the *cause*—shoe friction and pressure.
Dr Scholl's Zino-pads

Sizes also for Callouses and Bunions

2-second gargle KILLS 5 million germs



Some antiseptics show tremendous germ-killing power under unusual laboratory conditions. But in actual use, they may not always repeat the performance. So we tested Mi 31 *in the mouth.*

In two seconds—normal gargling time—Mi 31 definitely destroyed 5 million germs, including those that cause sore throat and infection! In addition it neutralized every food odor—even that of onions—and prevented its return!

Millions of people already know the value of Mi 31 as a mouthwash, and as a gargle for sore throat. Many more should know it, to be secure against bad breath and throat infection.

Mi 31 Solution is a specialty of the United Drug Company, the world's largest manufacturer of drug store products. Sold only by your Rexall Drug Store.

Mi 31 Solution
A Cleansing Deodorant

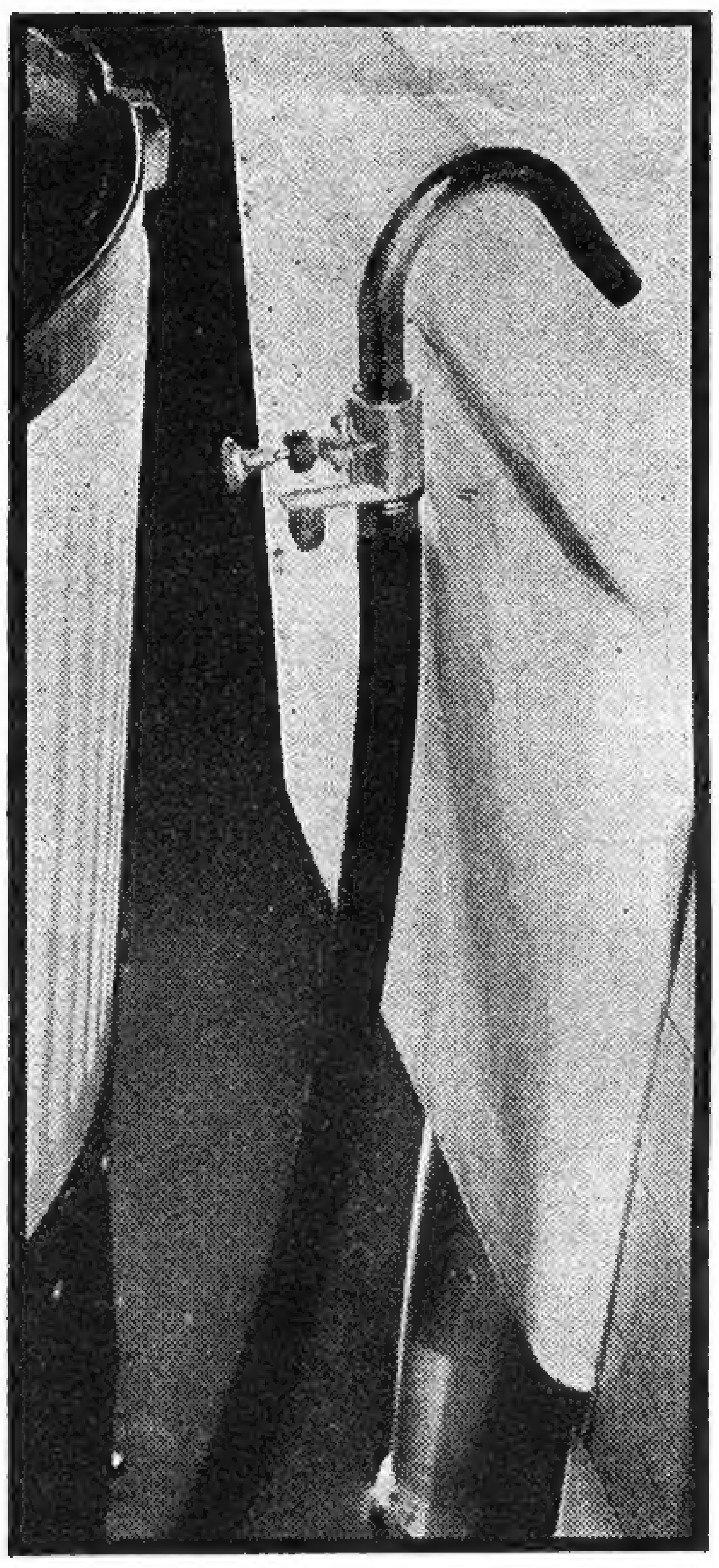
Mi 31 SOLUTION

You can always save with safety at your Rexall Drug Store. Liggett and Owl Stores are also Rexall Drug Stores.

This advertisement is for

Married Men

who want to save time and energy for their wives, and money for themselves. Hint: Give a useful gift to your home; you can spend more advantageously if you consult these booklets on the latest news about labor saving devices and decorative suggestions. Send for them now before you visit the shops.



You won't have to rush to empty pails of water for your wife, if you have a laundry machine with an electric pump. This is just one of the things to remember suggested in Booklet No. 61..LAUNDRY APPLIANCES 25c

When your wife suggests an electric dishwasher so you can get out to the movies; or if she wants a small washing machine for the baby's diapers; or a new refrigerator—you will want to find the best equipment for your special requirements. Send for these booklets before you buy, then you will know how to spend your money most intelligently.

61..LAUNDRY APPLIANCES..............................25c
All types of washing and ironing equipment, the principles on which they operate, how to save space.

12..WELL PLANNED KITCHENS............................25c
How to save time and steps by convenient arrangement; exactly what you need in small, medium and large kitchens.

33..REFRIGERATORS 25c
What size to buy; facts about automatic and ice refrigerators; care, cleaning and advantageous use.

Are You Decorating?

Whether you are planning to rearrange your living room, do over the whole house or just one room, these booklets will help you.

44..LIVING ROOMS FOR GRACIOUS LIVING.................25c
7 charming rooms. Excellent ideas which you can adapt in your own home to add comfort and brightness.

45..DECORATING EIGHT BEDROOMS.......................25c
Master bedrooms; guest rooms; a room a boy will bring his friends; a lovely room for a young girl.

42..SUN ROOMS THE WHOLE YEAR ROUND.................15c
Bringing sunshine into your home throughout the year.

37..CHEERFUL DINING ROOMS..........................25c
Beautiful backgrounds for delicious meals; how to arrange for greatest ease in serving.

18..PAINTING FURNITURE..................................25c
How to refinish, lacquer and paint. Ideas to freshen furniture you now have.

---Send This Coupon---

DELINEATOR INSTITUTE
161 Sixth Avnue, N. Y.

Send me booklets

61..25c 12..25c
33..25c 44..25c
45..25c 42..15c
37..25c 18..25c
$1.90 for all

Name..

Address.......................................

City...................... State...........
112B

ADVENTURE
Feb. 1st, 1932

Published twice a month by The Butterick Publishing Company, Butterick Building, New York, N. Y. Yearly subscription $4.00 in advance; single copy 25 cents. Entered as second-class matter Oct. 1, 1910, at the post-office at New York, N. Y., under the act of March 3, 1879. Additional entry at Chicago, Illinois.

Volume 81
Number 4

Adventure
(Registered U.S. Patent Office)

CONTENTS

for February 1st

1932
Vol. LXXXI No. 4

A. A. Proctor
EDITOR

The Criminal . . . . Malcolm Wheeler-Nicholson 2
A Story of the U. S. Cavalry Posts
A Niger Mystery . . . . T. Samson Miller 19
War Zone . . . . Commander Edward Ellsberg 20
A Novelette of Submarine Warfare
Sitting Bull and Custer's Last Stand Stanley Vestal 50
The Second of Three Articles on the Great Chief of the Sioux
The Jester of Moscow Kremlin . Natalie B. Sokoloff 64
A Story of Imperial Russia
Furling The Foresail *(A Poem)* . . Bill Adams 79
Distance . . . . Leland S. Jamieson 80
A Story of Balloon Racing
Sir Buccaneer . . . . H. Bedford-Jones 92
A Novelette of the Freebooters of the Spanish Main
Two-Gun Turns The Tables . . Howard Ellis Davis 116
A Story of the South
Khyada . . . . Georges Surdez 126
A Story of the Foreign Legion
Sword-Boxing . . . . James W. Bennett 143
Smoky Pass . . . . Aubrey Boyd 146
A Novel of the Klondike Gold Rush Three Parts—Part II

The Camp-Fire 184 Ask Adventure 188 Trail Ahead 192

Cover Design by Hubert Rogers *Headings by Harry Townsend*

Published twice a month by The Butterick Publishing Company, Butterick Building, New York, N. Y., U. S. A., Joseph A. Moore, Chairman of the Board; S. R. Latshaw, President; W. C. Evans, Secretary; Fred Lewis, Treasurer; A. A. Proctor, Editor. Entered as Second Class Matter, October 1, 1910, at the Post Office at New York, N. Y., under the Act of March 3, 1879. Additional entry at Chicago, Illinois. Yearly subscription $4.00 in advance. Single copy, Twenty-five Cents. Foreign postage, $2.00 additional.
Trade Mark Registered; Copyright, 1932, by The Butterick Publishing Company in the United States and Great Britain.

A Story of the Texas Border

The CRIMINAL

By MALCOLM WHEELER-NICHOLSON

WE HAD foregathered early at the club and were sipping pale yellow cocktails from silver cups while waiting for dinner. It had become somewhat of an institution, that weekly dinner, with anywhere from eight to ten of us turning up. Lately we had acquired the habit of inviting some distinguished guest: Last week it had been a famous explorer; the week before that a visiting British novelist, monocled and adenoidal; and he had been preceded by a Scandinavian prince who was also well known as a writer and a poet.

"Who's the jest of honor for tonight?" asked Tewkebury, who had come up from Long Island in an express cruiser which cut the waters of the bay like an arrow. Old Tewk was fabulously wealthy, but a good old bird all the same.

The rest of the crowd stopped their chat for a moment and looked inquiringly at Hughes. Dick Hughes, by virtue of being head of one of the largest and best known publishing houses in New York City, with all the contacts in the literary and artistic world that such a position implied, had been tacitly elected master of ceremonies in the matter of distinguished guests.

"John Granville," announced Hughes calmly.

"Whe-ew!" said some one. "You don't care whom you pick to entertain us, do you?"

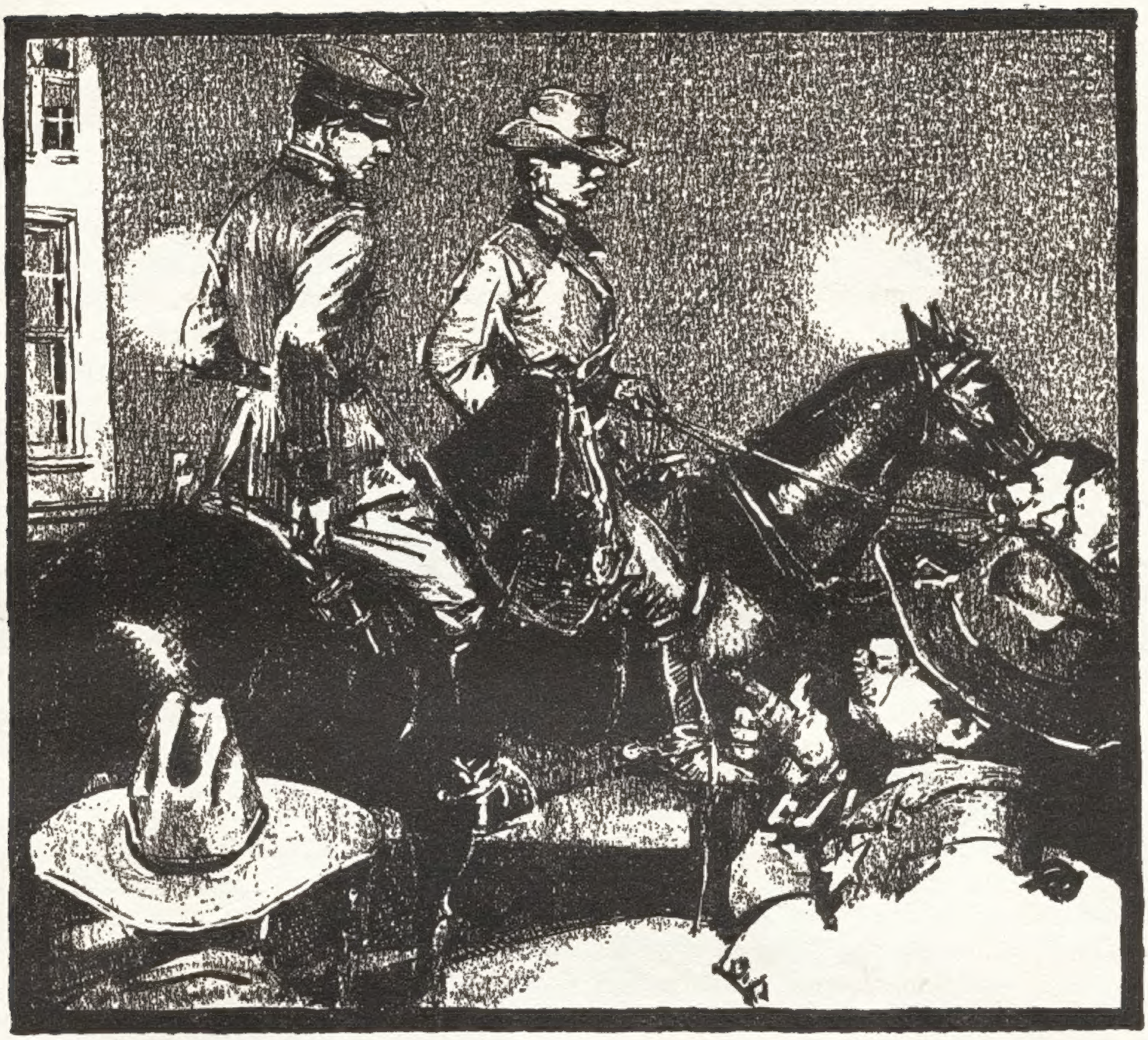
At the moment John Granville's name was on every one's lips. An exceedingly famous criminal lawyer, he had, after a series of spectacular victories, just succeeded in winning a case that had filled the headlines of the newspapers for weeks. Without a doubt he was the most noted criminal lawyer in America.

"But isn't he speaking at some kind of shindig given him by the city tonight?" asked Judge Banfield.

"Yep—" nodded Hughes—"and he's going to be late. I've already arranged with the steward to delay dinner three-quarters of an hour, and ordered more cocktails."

Just then Dr. Phillips came in; Kingdon Phillips, the man called into consultation on the illness of the King of Spain's first born, on the illness of the Queen of Sweden and a lot more. Phillips had been decorated by "half the crowned teeth" of Europe, as he'd expressed it, and invariably gave the bits of enamel and ribbon to his grandchildren for playthings.

We were all very fond of him and there was genuine pleasure in our greetings as he joined us. The talk ran from one subject to another, including a discussion of the guest of honor, John Granville, and a learned dissertation on the code of ethics of criminal lawyers by Judge Banfield. There was also some talk of the stock market, which was gyrating wildly, and some discussion of the tabloid papers. I think it was some contest running in one of



these that started the affair. It was a contest for a small prize wherein various people told of their first jobs or the first money they earned. Whatever it was, it brought forth several interesting yarns until finally some one turned to Dr. Phillips.

"Do you remember your first patient, Doctor?" he was asked.

"Do I?" The doctor's kindly face became suddenly veiled with abstraction. "It would be very difficult for me to forget it, seeing that the man who brought me my first patient also made me an accessory to murder, house breaking and subornation of perjury!"

"Those be strong words," commented Judge Banfield. "Elucidate."

"Yes, I suppose I can," returned the doctor after a moment's reflection. "You know that, like a priest, a doctor has to possess some sort of feeling for the sanctity of the confession. But these things happened so many years ago that they must be lost in the mists of time by now. In any case I'll not give the real names of places or people."

The steward deftly refilled the tall stemmed silver cups and passed about a plate of canapés, caviar and cheese things that went well with the dry cocktails.

II

AFTER I was graduated from medical school and served my period of interneship at a hospital [said the doctor] I cast about for a practise. New York City, then as now, was plentifully supplied with doctors. It seemed to me that there was something in Horace Greely's advice and, being a young man, I went West, arriving at last in the confines of the State of Texas. Texas was a pretty wild place in those days. I found myself at last down near the Border, headed for a small town on the Rio Grande that was reported badly in need of a physician.

This night I was still some ten miles away from my objective, but because there was the very mischief of a sandstorm raging and I had already made thirty-five miles by stage that day, I decided to put up for the night at this intermediate place, a fair sized town. Call it Cactus. It boasted only one hotel, and that a frame shack whose yellow pine boards had been all twisted and riven by the heat until there was plentiful entry for sand and wind and dust.

But it was the best that the place afforded. After supper I headed forth to see what sights the town possessed. I gravitated, naturally enough, to the saloon, from which radiated light and warmth and music of a type, all of which furnished a pleasing contrast to the bare discomfort of my hotel room.

The place was filled with a pretty hard looking set of characters—cowpunchers, Mexicans, gamblers and other denizens of the Border. Leaning against the bar was a compactly built man in the blue uniform of the United States Cavalry, wearing a sergeant's yellow chevrons on his blouse. I remembered that there was a small Cavalry post near the town where I was headed. He was drinking quietly by himself and seemed to be speaking to no one. His face was serene and strong, the face of a man in his fifties, but well preserved.

He was watching a gambling game going on at a table near the wall. Three-card monte it was and it was providing fast action. The cards were being dealt by a man who possessed the sharpest, coldest, most inhumanly hard eyes I have ever seen on a white man. There was something merciless and compelling about the fellow, some quality of razor-sharp steel and lightning viciousness which made me reflect that I would not like to have him for an enemy. He was exceedingly sparely built, but dynamically so. His clothes were not especially noteworthy, except that he wore an expensive looking diamond ring on his left hand, a ring whose sparkle drew attention to the fact that the hand lacked three fingers and possessed a broken thumb.

I stood next to the Cavalry sergeant, but found him laconic and not overly disposed to conversation, although he was courteous enough in a formal sort of way and inclined his head gravely as I lifted my glass to him. He was drinking pretty steadily, although I could not see that it had any effect upon him.

"Who is the gambler?" I remember asking him as we both watched the game.

"Peters," he replied. "Broken Thumb Peters—owns this bar and the hotel and about half the township," said the sergeant laconically.

I gazed at the gambler with renewed interest, wondering how a man with the handicap of that badly crippled hand could deal cards so deftly. It was rather fascinating to watch, for he used that crippled hand with all the ease of long practise, and it did not seem to handicap him in the slightest.

After awhile the fatigue of the day's journey in that swaying, bouncing stagecoach began to tell upon me. I strolled back to the hotel and went to my room and must have dropped instantly to sleep. I was awakened by a light shining in my eyes and the sound of voices. The light was coming through a crack in the thin walls from the next room, in which I heard the chink of money and the clink of glasses.

Looking through the crack, I saw that a card game was in progress, some five men in shirtsleeves gathered about a table on which lay stacks of gold and silver money.

Seated at the board was the gambler,

Broken Thumb Peters. Around the table were four men whom I had not seen before; one of them evidently a halfbreed; another one a florid faced, dull eyed, heavy lidded man of very unprepossessing appearance; a third who was exceedingly thin and possessed of a twisted jaw that gave his ratty features a sardonic cast. The fourth man was a well fed and arrogant looking type, wearing a large black mustache under which showed rather full lips that were very red and moist as he kept licking them when the cards were dealt. They were playing poker, as I quickly gathered.

I dozed off again and again, hearing through my half sleeping, half waking, semi-consciousness, the drone of their voices and the occasional scrape of a chair leg or a muttered oath. The last time I saw them was when dawn was already making the candlelight pale and ghostly.

They were silent now, and there was some tenseness about them that even made itself felt to me, half asleep as I was. I peered sleepily through the crack again and saw the black mustached man looking pale and drawn, while Peters was playing steadily and remorselessly, with his savage, merciless intensity no whit dimmed by the lateness of the hour.

When I woke up again they were gone and the sun was streaming in. I was on my way in short order, after a hasty breakfast of bacon and beans and saleratus biscuit washed down with strong black coffee. There was little of interest on the dusty mesa except an occasional jackrabbit or a herd of antelope sighted at a distance, and I was glad when finally we drove into the town where I was to begin my practise as a doctor.

IT WAS none too hopeful looking a prospect on first view. The town consisted of one street of sad looking adobe houses, with the inevitable saloon and general store. There was not even a hotel; and I arranged with the storekeeper to sleep in a back room of his shack until I could find quarters.

"So ye're aimin' to set up in business as a doctor, air ye?" asked the storekeeper, pulling at his straggly beard. "I'm thinkin' ye'll find it mighty poor pickin's, stranger," he assured me. "What fellers don't get shot hereabouts gits hanged, an' in either case there ain't much left for the doctor to do."

After the second day I began to believe that he was right. Never were there such healthy people as lived in that little border town of Tres Hermanos—which is not its real name. I found an adobe shack at the end of the street toward the Cavalry post. This post lay outside the town about a quarter of a mile. In sheer boredom I walked out one day to inspect this and found it a one-company post, consisting of a long, low, adobe barracks on one side of a dusty parade ground, while on the other side was an adobe building that served as headquarters. There were two adobe shacks flanking it, evidently the officers' quarters.

A few men in blue were about and there was a sentry near the gate, but most of the soldiers were down on the picket lines behind the barracks, feeding or watering or doing some of the things that horses are always needing. Anyway, it was a dispirited looking scene; and the soldiers stared at me curiously and in none too friendly fashion, so that I returned to town and entered my bare, one-roomed shack once more. Remember that I had still to treat my first patient. From all signs, it began to look as though many a long day would pass before I achieved that distinction.

But fate was to rule otherwise.

It must have been about midnight that I was roused from my sleep by some one hammering on the door. Opening it, I found myself faced by a tall, gray eyed young chap clad in blue uniform and wearing gold shoulder straps on his blouse. As nearly as I could figure, he was a lieutenant from the post nearby. He did not come in.

"Doctor," he said, and his voice was tense and strained, "can you come immediately? There's a man shot up at the post." He had to shout, for there was a sandstorm on and the wind was howling.

"Certainly," I replied, hurried into coat and boots and grabbed my instrument and medicine case.

I had bought a saddlehorse for just such emergencies, and hastily saddled him while the lieutenant paced back and forth impatiently.

In a minute or two I was in the saddle and we set off at a gallop through the black night, with the wind volleying clouds of stinging sand particles into our faces.

"Is the man seriously injured?" I shouted.

The young officer nodded somberly, but no further words were exchanged. Soon we drew up by one of the two adobe houses flanking the headquarters building and dismounted. Following the officer's lead, I entered the larger of these two dwellings, finding myself in a sort of living room dimly lighted by a candle lamp. There were signs of disorder in this room, a small table overturned and a bearskin rug kicked to one side; some articles of clothing lay scattered on the floor and the blanket curtains screening a rear room were torn down. The lieutenant led me into the bedroom, which was furnished only with a single cot and a trunk and bureau.

On the bed lay a man with his eyes closed, breathing heavily. I recognized him immediately. It was the well fed and arrogant looking man with the large black mustache and the full lips whom I had seen gambling in that hotel room in Cactus.

The lieutenant held the lamp high while I examined the wound. Some effort had already been made to stanch it, as I found a crude bandage in place. Ripping this off, I found that the man on the bed had a bullet wound passing through his lungs near the heart. A bubble of blood was on his lips as I examined him, and he was unconscious. I shook my head but went to work. It was while I was working over him that the death rattle came and he died right there before us. I had lost my first patient!

The wind still howled outside and drove volleys of sand against the adobe walls. Turning about, I gazed at the lieutenant and found him seated, his head in his hands and a look of suffering on his face.

"How did it happen?" I asked him gently, studying the body of the man on the bed, whose heavy figure was so inert in death.

"I murdered him," said the young officer, his voice hoarse.

What sort of answer can one make to such a statement?

I made none, simply looked my amazement, waiting for him to explain.

"Yes," said the lieutenant, "I murdered him, committing the civil crime of murder and the military crime of raising my hand against my commanding officer."

"But what—how?" I was astounded. With my bewilderment the young officer grew more calm.

"There is nothing that can be done for him?" he asked.

I shook my head.

"In that case there is no use waiting in here. I have a few hours of liberty left, until his striker finds his body in the morning." The officer was strangely calm now. I must say that I pitied him, he was so young and fine looking and so obviously had the world and life before him.

THE Colt revolver which had fired the fatal shot was on the floor near the bed.

"Whose gun is that?" I asked, pointing at the weapon.

"His—Captain Batterson's," returned the lieutenant absently.

We went into the living room where I found a chair. The young officer flung himself down on a settee and stared unseeing into space, running his fingers absently through his thick mass of hair, which waved in luxuriant fashion back from his forehead. It was an unusual gesture, this absent minded motion of his, for he spread his four fingers wide, ran them through the wavy length of hair and then closed the fingers as a person would close a pair of scissors.

"Tell me how it all happened," I asked quietly.

He roused himself and sat upright on the settee.

"He was a very hard man to get along with," began the lieutenant haltingly. "Not only a strict disciplinarian, but an unreasonable one. Since I've been serving under him, I have had occasion, time and again, to expostulate with him on some uncalled for piece of tyranny toward the men. They hate him whole heartedly. As a companion and brother officer he left a whole lot to be desired, for he was morose and suspicious. Consequently we saw little of each other outside of drill and stables and the orderly room.

"The troop is made up of old soldiers, some of them excellent men, especially the noncommissioned officers. One of these, Sergeant Rawlins, is a splendid noncommissioned officer, a man in his fifties, but as strong as an ox and sensible and efficient." The lieutenant's words came slowly, with evident effort, and he paused time and again, sunk in abstraction from which he roused himself with difficulty.

"He broke me in when I joined as a shavetail from the Point—you know how a sergeant can direct and advise a young officer. Well, he did that for me, and I've grown a lot of respect for him and feel very grateful for his efforts in getting me started right. But lately the captain began to find fault with Sergeant Rawlins. Nearly every day he had him up on the carpet for some trivial matter. Three times he has threatened to break him and reduce him to the ranks for matters that were patently not the sergeant's fault. In addition to that he has picked him for every unpleasant detail that came up. The sergeant hasn't said a word. Simply gone ahead doing his duty the best he knew, uncomplaining and loyal.

"The quieter the sergeant took things, the more exacting and unreasonable did the captain become, and the situation grew steadily worse.

"A few days ago we received word that the money to pay the troop and provide for our commissary needs was being sent to Cactus by express messenger, but that it would be necessary for the commanding officer of the troop to secure it from there. It's about three thousand dollars in gold, all told, and none too safe a package to be carrying around this lawless country.

"Captain Batterson announced his intention of going after it himself, taking only one man with him in the buckboard. I tried to dissuade him from the course, asking him to take an escort, but he told me 'to mind my own damn business.' Thereupon he announced that he was going to take Sergeant Rawlins with him and ordered the old sergeant to get ready to accompany him.

"They left here, the two of them, about three days ago. Yesterday evening the buckboard returned, with Captain Batterson driving and with Sergeant Rawlins in irons.

"The captain stormed into headquarters here, ordering Rawlins confined and shouting that the sergeant had stolen the three thousand dollars. Knowing Sergeant Rawlins, I didn't believe a word of it. I found opportunity to go to Rawlins' cell.

"'I don't know what it's all about,' he told me. 'We got the money from the express messenger, all in canvas bags, and heavy enough it was. I helped the captain take it into his room at the hotel and then I went out to the bar and had a drink or two and turned into my own bed in the stables at about midnight. At daylight I'm wakened up by Captain Batterson and the sheriff and clapped into irons, accused of stealing the money. They searched me and found four or five twenty-dollar gold pieces in my pockets. I never put them there nor had them when I went to sleep. And that's all I know about it.'

"Such was the story that Sergeant Rawlins told me," continued the lieutenant.

"And I believed the sergeant," said the young officer. "Knowing him as I did and seeing the honesty of the man shining out of his eyes, I could do nothing else but believe him. But the captain was bitter against him and was writing out a set of court-martial charges. When it was ready he announced his intention of sending Sergeant Rawlins back to headquarters under guard for trial. It was a serious situation for the old sergeant with his commanding officer's word against his, and the testimony of the sheriff against him as well.

"I stewed over the matter but could find no solution.

"In the meantime the old sergeant asked me to be his counsel, and I accepted. I've studied law, always have been interested in it. As a result I've had some small success as a counsel for enlisted men and gained the reputation of being a pretty fair 'guardhouse lawyer'. But this case was going to tax every bit of knowledge I possessed.

"During the day I got out my law books and studied the legal aspects of the case. But there were some peculiar facts about the affair that I could not understand.

"Last night I decided to do a little investigating upon my own account. Saying no word to any one, I quietly got my horse and rode to Cactus. I spent several hours in the town, investigating the whole business. This done, I rode back, arriving here about ten o'clock. I came straight here to the captain's quarters as soon as I had turned my horse over. Captain Batterson was up and waiting for me. He had discovered that my horse was missing from the picket line and had put two and two together.

"'Well?' he snarled at me as I came in. He stood there by that door, fully dressed and wearing his revolver belt.

"'Captain,' I said, 'I've been making some inquiries about that stolen money.'

"'Well?' he repeated, and his eyes looked dangerous.

"'Captain,' I said, 'Sergeant Rawlins did *not* take that money!'

"He laughed then, an unpleasant barking laugh that was not the least mirthful, but kept watching me like a trapped animal.

"'No, Captain,' I went on, 'Sergeant Rawlins never saw that money. But I'll tell you who did see it!' And I guess I must have taken a step forward, for his eyes became filled with a savage glare and he stepped back against those blanket curtains in the doorway. I should have been warned, but I was not thinking of personal danger and went right on: 'I know who did see it. Broken Thumb Jack Peters saw it—and he saw you seated near it gambling it away!'

"I had scarcely said the words when the captain drew his revolver and fired pointblank at me. He caught his arm in the blanket and missed me. You can see where the bullet hit the opposite wall near the outside door. Just as he was preparing to fire again I grappled with him. We swayed back and forth, that blanket curtain getting twisted in the mixup. I was trying to get possession of the gun, but the blanket kept getting in the way. Then suddenly a shot went off and I felt Captain Batterson go limp behind the curtain. Pushing it aside, I saw him fall to the floor with blood streaming from his chest."

HERE the lieutenant paused a moment and my own mind filled in the rest of the picture.

"Legally speaking," he went on, "it was not murder, but justifiable homicide committed in self-defense.

But how to prove that?"

"Well, the way things are you should stand a good chance," I said, but the lieutenant only shook his head.

I was doing some rapid thinking. The man whose body was stretched out on the cot in the bedroom was of course the same man I had seen through the crack in the wall of my room at the hotel in Cactus.

And I had seen that man throwing handful after handful of golden twenties into the game from a large stack in front of him on the table. I knew that the lieutenant spoke the truth. And, after all, it was a despicable trick that the dead man had tried to play in laying the blame on the old sergeant. I wondered if it was the same sergeant whom I had seen in the barroom at Cactus, and decided that it must be.

"I'll help you all I can," I offered, but the lieutenant shook his head gloomily.

"Your help won't do any good, thank you all the same," he answered.

"I don't see why not!" I retorted warmly. "I'm the only doctor within two hundred miles. My word as to the cause of death must carry weight."

Again the lieutenant shook his head.

"I did not tell you," he said, "that on my way back from Cactus I had the sensation of being followed. Even with the noise of the wind and the blowing sand, I had an apprehensive feeling weighing me down throughout the whole of that return journey. I forgot it in the heat of my conversation with the captain and naturally forgot it in the excitement of the struggle. But after the captain fell, mortally wounded, I heard some one behind me in the doorway. Turning about, I saw Broken Thumb Jack Peters staring at me, a look of triumph in his eyes.

"In a second it flashed over me that he had become suspicious of my activities in Cactus and, being in collusion with the captain, had followed me out to warn his partner in crime.

" 'So you decided to murder the captain, did you?' he drawled, and before I could open my mouth to say a word he was gone. I heard his horse galloping off through the storm. So you see, Doctor, the case against me is complete, including the one credible but hostile witness."

I frowned at this bad news, then sat for awhile doing some hard thinking. Then I rose and went in and examined the body and the revolver again. The lieutenant sat there, listless and morose, as I came out.

"Well," I said, "seeing that you brought me to my first patient, I'll have to help you out. There's no use sitting here and waiting for trouble to hit you. Rouse up your men and have them come up here. Get hold of the man on duty as sentry."

The lieutenant looked at me strangely, then bowed his head and went out. Soon I saw lights in the barracks and in a few minutes the porch of the adobe shack was crowded with half clad soldiers, all gaping curiously.

"Send in five men at a time," I said to the lieutenant, and obediently he selected five of the senior noncoms.

I led them to the body, bidding them examine it. Then I showed them the revolver and various points about the room. Then I warned them to remember what they had seen and sent out for the next batch. The lieutenant was slightly puzzled by all this, but followed my lead uncomplainingly.

The last man to come in was the sentinel on post, who stated that he had seen Broken Thumb Peters gallop away from the fort, but had not seen either the lieutenant or myself enter, which was natural, inasmuch as we came in quietly while Peters left with a whirl and a gallop which aroused the sentry from his shelter against the sandstorm and brought him forth in time to see the man and horse disappearing into the night.

These things done, we decided that the next step was to recover the money which Sergeant Rawlins had been accused of stealing. To dissipate the cloud that hung over both the lieutenant and over Sergeant Rawlins, we saw no way out of it save to ride to Cactus and face the music and force the truth out by some means or other.

Sergeant Rawlins soon appeared, released from confinement by the lieutenant's order. I saw immediately that he was the same sergeant whom I had spoken to in the barroom at Cactus.

At any rate, we three rode forth into the dark and the storm, bringing the buckboard along with us, driven by another soldier, and leaving a guard over Captain Batterson's body. It still lacked several hours of dawn and it was certainly no night in which to be abroad. That Texas wind can cut like a knife on those uplands above the Rio Grande, and with the stinging particles of sand to add to its fury it is not a pleasant thing to face. I own that I was nearly exhausted when I finally saw the lights of Cactus gleaming before us.

But as we came nearer I saw all the signs of a lot of commotion in the streets of the town. Men were riding up and down, the hitching rails were lined with horses and there was all the appearance of a convention in full swing. It was an unusual crowd for any town at that hour of the morning, certainly exceptional for Cactus, where there weren't many people anyway. Personally I felt a little worried; but the lieutenant rode along calmly enough, the sergeant riding beside him. Behind us the buckboard rattled and jolted, pulled by the two sleek Government mules.

No one sighted us until we rode up near the saloon. Then a yell went up from some one, and suddenly the saloon and the store and the hotel were spewing forth men and, before we knew what had happened, the street was boiling with humanity and we could not move forward through the mob, it was so deep.

And then I did get scared, for every man in that crowded street was yelling at us and shaking his fists at the lieutenant and the mob was yelling "Lynch him!" and growling deep in its throat exactly like an enraged wild beast.

Broken Thumb Jack Peters had done a good job.

Just when I thought they would pull us off our horses and drag us down and tear us to pieces, the bulky form of the sheriff appeared, plowing his way through the mass of men, leaving a wake of bruised and battered heads and shoulders behind him as he came on like some heavily laden ship.

* * *

The doctor paused in his quiet voiced recital as the club steward came to the door of the private dining room and signaled for Hughes. The publisher rose and excused himself and went to the telephone. We waited, and the doctor did not continue his story until Hughes had returned.

"Looks like our guest is going to be held up on us another half hour," hughes informed us.

Old General Shattuck had come in shortly after the commencement of the story and he asked who the guest of honor was to be. Several of us told him. The old general was slightly deaf and we had to repeat that it was John Granville, the noted criminal lawyer, who was expected; and the general, who had been inspector-general of the Regular Army before he retired, nodded his head and looked hopefully at Dr. Phillips, waiting for the continuation of the story. The steward did his duty, the cocktail glasses were replenished and pipes and cigars relighted.

* * *

Yes [continued the doctor] things looked pretty bad; and I, for one, was glad to see the burly form of that sheriff heave into view. But my hope was doomed to quick extinction when he came nearer and shouted out that the "lootenant was under arrest for murder."

The crowd grew quiet, ominously quiet as the sheriff spoke, and every one could hear the young officer as he replied.

"What did you say, Sheriff?" he asked calmly.

"I say, Lootenant, that I hereby arrest you fer the murder o' Captain Batterson!" shouted the law officer again. And again that low growl went up from the crowd.

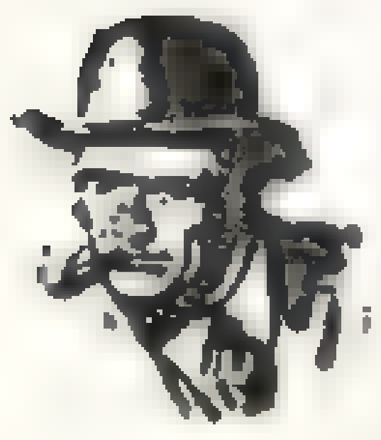
I tell you frankly it made the hair stand up on the back of my head. Any one who has heard a similar mob will know what I mean.

"Upon whose evidence?" asked the lieutenant calmly.

It was then that a voice came from the door of the saloon nearby.

"On my evidence!" said the voice, and I looked over to see the tense figure and coldly murderous eyes of Broken Thumb Peters. "And, moreover, I seen him when he committed the crime," Peters went on. "I seen him pull a gun on an unarmed man and shoot him down in cold blood!"

That sudden authoritative voice carried conviction to the wavering spirits of the mob and roused them into dangerous ferocity once more. They began to growl and surge against our horses. I noted that Sergeant Rawlins had backed out and was close to the fringes of the mob.



THE voice of Broken Thumb Peters had also hardened the sheriff's wavering resolution into renewed strength. He laid a hand on the lieutenant's bridle rein and attempted to jerk it loose.

The action sent the officer into white faced anger.

"Take your hands from my reins!" he blazed, and there was that in his eyes and voice that made the stout sheriff hasten to obey.

"Drag the dirty murderer outa the saddle!" yelled Broken Thumb Peters. The men pressed close, and clutching hands reached for the officer.

"Back, you scum!" said the lieutenant, his voice menacing. He rode toward the saloon, toward Peters, the crowd closing in behind him threateningly, but not yet daring to lay hands on him. There was something about that tall figure in the Army blue and gold that spoke of strength and courage.

Little attention was paid to me. Men came in between the officer riding ahead and my horse, but I managed to push along in spite of it, forcing my mount through the press of bodies at the cost of many low growled threats but nothing else. Glancing over the heads of the crowd, I saw that Sergeant Rawlins had disappeared somewhere and with him the buckboard and its driver.

By now the officer was near to Broken Thumb Peters and towering above him from the saddle.

"Sheriff, before you get so hasty about arresting an officer of the military branch of the United States Government, you'd better be sure you are right," said the lieutenant quietly. "Before you start arresting people for murder on the unsupported testimony of one witness, let's examine this thing from the legal viewpoint. In the first place, you have not established the *corpus delicti!* You can't accuse people of murder unless the fact of murder having been done is established by an examination of the body. Have you seen the body of Captain Batterson, Sheriff? No! Has any one else here seen it? No!"

"I seen it and seen the murder done," growled Broken Thumb.

The lieutenant whirled on him, his finger pointing accusingly.

"You claim to have been present when murder was committed. Why didn't you arrest the murderer? Don't you know that an ordinary citizen, when present at the commission of a crime, is empowered to arrest the criminal? Don't you know that failure to do so, or failure to so attempt, might conceivably make you an accessory to the crime? No, Sheriff, you are going at this backward."

The lieutenant shook his head.

The sheriff looked nonplused. Jack Peters was glaring around at the crowd, looking for supporters. But the crowd had grown strangely quiet under the influence of the lieutenant's quiet analysis of the legal situation.

"You are going at it backward," repeated the lieutenant. "Your first duty is to determine whether a crime has been committed. Your second duty is to determine how the crime was committed and fix the responsibility therefor upon the person or persons whom *prima facie* evidence points to as most culpable.

"Until these steps are taken you are executing nothing but lynch law. So much for the charge of murder. Now, Sheriff, there *has* been a crime committed against the United States Government. As an officer of the military branch of the Government I hereby make complaint to you, the nearest peace officer, and demand the arrest of the guilty man. Sheriff, I call upon you to arrest that man!" And he pointed to Broken Thumb Peters, who stood eyeing him angrily from the door of the saloon.

"Arrest that man, Sheriff—" the lieutenant's voice cracked out like a whip lash—"for the illegal possession of money belonging to the United States Government!"

Peters stared insolently at the man towering above him. The crowd gazed uncertainly from the sheriff to the cavalry officer and from Peters back to the sheriff. Then Peters laughed.

"Where do you get all that cock and bull stuff?" he jeered.

But the lieutenant paid no attention to him.

"Did you hear me, Sheriff?" he asked in a level voice. "I call upon you as a civil officer to arrest a man who is committing a crime against the United States Government. Upon your failure to do so the law empowers me to take certain steps. Are you going to arrest him or not?"

The sheriff looked from Peters to the Army officer above him. He was puzzled and uncertain. Just where the civil power left off and the military power assumed authority was a moot question in the sheriff's mind. And he didn't want to make any mistakes.

"Ain't that kinda vague?" he temporized, looking to Peters for help.

But Peters, with a sardonic grin on his face, was leaving the thick headed sheriff to his own devices. I saw the gambler glance out into the crowd behind me and nod ever so briefly, but to whom he nodded and why, I could not figure out, although it made me worried and apprehensive of some evil about to befall us.

"If you want me to be more specific, Sheriff, I call upon you to deliver up to me three thousand dollars in gold, brought into this town last night by Captain Batterson and left here in improper custody, said three thousand dollars in gold being property of the United States Government intended for the pay of its armed forces, and said money being now in the possession of this man before us—" and he indicated Peters by a brief and impersonal nod.

The quasi-legal phrasing he used and the calm certitude of his manner, coupled with the fact that after all he was an officer of the Government, wearing its uniform, were beginning to have their effect upon the crowd and upon the sheriff as well.

There was a malicious grin upon Peters' face that I did not like at all. It was too much the smile of a man who temporizes in order to amuse himself and who can stop the show at any time he wishes. The sheriff continued to scratch his head uncertainly; the crowd whispered and muttered; Peters still carried that malicious half smile upon his face, and again I saw him nod imperceptibly to some one of those unknown members of the crowd in the press about us.

And then, too late, I saw the meaning of his signal. I yelled a warning, but the lieutenant did not hear me nor did he look around as a coiling length of rope swished through the air and leaped hungrily down upon him, pinioning his arms to his sides. A roar went up from the crowd as the man with the rope jerked it taut and started to haul the officer out of the saddle. The lieutenant strained with every ounce of his strength to loosen the encircling bonds, but unavailingly, for the man at the other end, a huge six-footer, was leaning back on the rope and gradually drawing it tighter.

"C'mon, jerk him out o' the saddle!" came Broken Thumb Peters' harsh voice, as the officer fought awkwardly against the rope.

Other men dashed to the aid of the six-footer who held the other end. I drove in madly, attempting to aid in some way.

Suddenly there came the sharp crack of a rifle. My attention was concentrated upon the tightened rope and the lieutenant's struggles, when I noticed the length of twisted hair line suddenly slacken and the lieutenant shake himself free. Turning about, I saw the bulky six-footer sink to the ground and the men about him giving back. All eyes were directed toward the side of the hotel, not a hundred paces away. From an upper window, giving directly upon the saloon front, came a thin wisp of smoke, barely discernible in the half light.

The lieutenant was not slow to take advantage of the lull. In a second he had freed his arms and, while the crowd was intent upon the single shot fired from the hotel window, he jerked in the rope and coiled it. The mob, worried and uncertain at this sudden, fatal shot from behind them, made no move to return the fire.

It was not until the harsh voice of Broken Thumb Jack Peters assailed their ears that they suddenly moved to action.

The ones nearest the hotel ran toward the building, drawing their guns. Scarcely had these men started when another shot rang from the window and the foremost of the attackers rolled over with a yell, jerked convulsively for a second, then lay still.

THERE was such a deadly quiet efficiency about that shooting, that the courage of the men about to attack the hotel suddenly deserted them. They began to back up and merge into the crowd again as though seeking the comfort of its numbers. The hotel window from which the shot had come loomed black and inscrutable in the half light afforded by the many lanterns and the brilliant lights of the saloon and general store.

And now Broken Thumb Jack Peters flew into a rage. Advancing toward the crowd, he called them every evil name that he could lay tongue to, ordering them to rush the hotel and get the man who had fired the shot. Throughout the whole affair the sheriff had kept his gun leveled upon the lieutenant. But now, in his anger, Peters passed between the sheriff and the officer, paying no attention to the tall lieutenant above him.

And then the lieutenant struck—swiftly and mercilessly. The first thing I knew there was a gasping cry from Peters, and I saw the lieutenant's revolver raised for another blow. Again it went down, landing on Peters' head. The gambler staggered and began to totter. Moving with all the speed of a battling puma, the lieutenant dropped the coil of rope over the man's shoulders, drew it tight and jerked him toward his horse.

I told you the young Cavalry officer was tall and well built, but I did not realize how strong he was until I saw him lean down from the saddle, seize the half unconscious gambler and lift him up on the horse before him. And there Peters hung, limp and slack, his head hanging down on one side of the pommel and his feet on the other, with the lieutenant holding a revolver over his back, a revolver which seemed to point at every one at once.

It seemed to me at that moment that the Cavalry officer loomed up like a superman. I knew for the first time the meaning of that phrase, "the man on horseback". And he must have appeared in equally terrifying aspect to the members of that mob, suddenly made leaderless by his swift actions.

He wasted no time in following up his quickly gained advantage.

"Having duly called upon the civil authorities for the arrest of this man and having been refused, I have now seized him and will place him in confinement until his case is decided."

He rose in his stirrups and his voice rang out firmly and confidently:

"I call upon each and every man here to observe the law and to refrain from interference with an officer of the Government in the discharge of his duty. Lest any man should be tempted, let me warn him here and now that as soon as he stirs a finger this crowd will come under the fire of fifty carbines in the hands of soldiers stationed around here—" he pointed out into the darkness and over toward the hotel, the black windows of which glowered down on the crowd in sinister fashion.

The fact that two shots had already come out of the night and laid low two of their number added to the confident voice and bearing of the lieutenant; every one in that mob looked about him nervously and peopled the blackness with the gaping muzzles of carbines. It was a timely bluff.

"I warn you all to stand in place for ten minutes," the lieutenant's voice came again. "At the end of which time I will move the prisoner to the Army post at Tres Hermanos. To Tres Hermanos I invite the law abiding elements of this town and the civil authorities for a meeting which shall determine the facts in the death of Captain Batterson and the punishment of the guilty."

And with that he rode through the crowd, towering above them and looking neither to the right nor left. I followed him, trying to copy his bold and confident bearing, but not making much success of it, I'm afraid. For that crowd was like a wild animal straining at the leash, and I expected any second that it would break and overwhelm us.

But we rode untouched out of the crowd and turned left toward the hotel. Under the shadow of its walls we looked back and saw the mob beginning to stir uneasily. It was like the first puff of wind coming through the forest before the storm. Things were too still and sultry to be healthy. Following the lieutenant, I rode around to the rear of the hotel where we were out of sight of the mob. And before us in the gloom was the buckboard with two men loading something into it. In the half light I made out the forms of Sergeant Rawlins and the teamster, sweating at their burdens.

Behind us, around the corner of the hotel, I heard a murmur rise from the crowd and swell gradually into a deeper, more savage note. I tell you it made the cold chills run down my back. But the lieutenant seemed unperturbed. He was off his horse in a second and had lowered the unconscious form of Broken Thumb Peters to the ground.

The teamster aided him while Sergeant Rawlins disappeared into the hotel. Broken Thumb was lifted into the buckboard and tied securely in place. Both men worked swiftly, for there were signs that the mob was beginning to move in our direction.

I looked anxiously toward the rear door of the hotel, waiting for Sergeant Rawlins to reappear.

"You've got everything?" asked the lieutenant of the teamster.

"Yes, sir."

"Then go! Work around the edges of town and take the main road and don't halt until you get to Tres Hermanos!"

The man was in the seat in one leap. His whip curled out over the two sleek mules and they broke into a gallop. The buckboard went leaping and lurching over the mesa and was lost in the darkness.

A yell came from around the corner of the hotel, then the sound of many feet. The lieutenant was back in the saddle again, holding the reins of Sergeant Rawlins' horse. Before I saw the motion I distinguished something black and shiny in the officer's hands, then I heard a sharp crack and another and saw the revolver spit flame. A scream of pain went up from the group of shadows at the corner of the hotel and then the darkness began to be stabbed with darts of flame.

I thought Sergeant Rawlins would never come. And then we heard the stamp of heavy boots within the hotel and a window was opened above our heads. Some one leaned out, aiming at us. Before the shot was fired there came another sharp crack from the lieutenant's gun and the figure at the window disappeared. The men at the corner of the house were remaining behind cover, and their shooting, so far, was mostly noise and confusion. But they grew bolder as we did not reply and a shadowy mass of them broke out into the open and began to shoot in our direction. I was certain by now that something had happened to Sergeant Rawlins. The lieutenant was worried, as well, for I could see him glancing anxiously at that rear door.

There was a window on the first floor just about on a level with our heads as we sat in the saddle. This suddenly opened and the muzzle of a rifle was shoved out. I watched it curiously, as I imagine one must watch the leap of a tiger, too paralyzed to feel fear. But the rifle muzzle swung toward the group at the corner of the house. It cracked viciously again and again—and that group melted away into the darkness.

A compact form leaped out of the window, gun in hand, and suddenly Sergeant Rawlins was vaulting into the saddle. Even our horses seemed to feel the glow of our relief, for they surged into a gallop and swept into the darkness of the mesa, spurning the earth as though shod with wings.

"There they go!" I heard an excited voice yell behind us, and firing broke out from all along the edge of the houses.

Looking back, I could see men hastily mounting the horses tethered in the light of the saloon. The street was boiling with horsemen by now, and we could see them sweeping out toward the road which led to Tres Hermanos. We were circling around to strike that road, but had lost time and distance by our detour on the mesa. It was going to be nip and tuck whether we or our pursuers got there first, but we slid into it about fifty yards in advance of them. It was dark at that hour of the morning, the darkness that precedes the dawn, and they did not see us; but we certainly heard them, for they were yelling like a pack of wolves.

They must have scattered and sought for us abroad on the mesa, for in no other way can I explain the ease with which we drew away from them until their high pitched yells died out behind us and we could hear nothing except the steady drum of our horses' hoofs and the rush of the night wind past our ears.

Then the lieutenant drew up and we halted, listening. Above the breathing of our horses and the creak of saddle leather we heard, far ahead, the rattle and clatter of the buckboard, speeding toward Tres Hermanos.

WE ARRIVED at the fort at last, to find the buckboard drawn up outside of the headquarters building with a crowd of curious soldiers examining the still unconscious form of Broken Thumb Peters. The lieutenant quickly had him brought in, and I made shift to dress the two nasty welts he had received across his head.

He came to under my ministrations.

"My second patient is going to recover!" I told the lieutenant, but he only nodded in preoccupied fashion and went to the door, where he issued some orders.

I heard men turning out under arms and realized that the lieutenant was taking precautions against an attack by the townsmen from Cactus.

His forethought was justified, for after I had seen Broken Thumb Peters brought back to consciousness and safely stowed away in irons, and after the sun began to light up the mesa, we saw a huge cavalcade of horsemen riding grimly toward the post.

"Here comes trouble!" I said in a weak attempt to be jocular, although God knows I was pretty well scared.

The lieutenant was serious, but for different reasons. He had no desire in the world to be put into the position of having to fire on the civilian population, that being the unforgivable crime to a Regular Army man, to be avoided at almost any cost.

But the soldiers were lined up and ready, looking very capable and fit in their blue as they stood at ease near headquarters with an outpost of some ten men at the gates.

But the civilians, seeing the glint of rifles and the readiness of the fort to give an account of itself, sent forward men to parley, among whom was the sheriff and a new man, the United States marshal for the district.

What was said at that meeting by the gate I do not know, but soon thereafter some twenty of the representative civilians came riding into the post and dismounted before headquarters.

In the large room of headquarters they lined the walls, gravely and quietly. The United States marshal was a higher type of man than the sheriff, but even he was slightly hazy as to his duties under the circumstances.

"Well, I guess we'd better organize a court and try this here case," he hazarded, but the lieutenant took him up quickly.

"You have no authority to organize courts and try cases," he said crisply. "What you are required to do under the circumstances is to empanel a coroner's jury to determine the fact of murder having been committed, by an examination of the body and attendant circumstances, and to give their opinion as to the person they consider responsible for the murder."

Thus coached in his duties, the marshal went about organizing his coroner's jury, aided by the lieutenant, who told him how many men it should have and what organization it should adopt. The jury was instructed by the lieutenant to proceed to the election of a foreman. With these formalities concluded, they went to examine the body, returning after a few minutes, grim faced and silent.

The lieutenant was called as the first witness and had to tell them about the requirements of sworn testimony and practically to administer his own oath before he proceeded. He had taken complete charge; and the men there deferred respectfully to his knowledge. Even as a witness under suspicion, he managed to dominate the proceedings.

The young officer, pale faced but steady eyed, gave his story as he had given it to me, leading up to the shooting and telling about the money. Nodding toward the door, he called in four men who between them carried the heavy sacks of specie.

"This money, in the original bags in which it was shipped from the paymaster at Laredo, was found concealed in a trunk in the room occupied by Peters," said the lieutenant, nodding to where the gambler stared balefully from his corner.

And then the lieutenant went on to tell of his accusation of the captain, of the struggle, of the two shots and the wounding of the captain. The grim and silent men about that room leaned forward, their eyes fixed on him steadily as he told his story. But he told it clearly and unfalteringly and I think made a good impression.

Then came my turn and I told of my being called out on my first case, and of the succeeding events. At the conclusion of my story I asked that the soldier witnesses, who had examined the body and the room and the revolver, be called. The first of these, a corporal, went on the stand and was sworn.

Yes, he answered me—for I had taken over his examination—he had seen the wound and the revolver.

"How many shots had been fired from the captain's revolver when you examined it?" I asked him.

"One, sir."

A gasp of astonishment went up from the lieutenant. The men who acted as jury looked startled. Every one in that crowded room grew alert and keenly interested.

"Did you notice anything strange about the window of the rear room where Captain Batterson's body was placed?" I asked.

He answered crisply:

"Yes, sir. The wind had blown a ridge of sand against the outside of the window. That ridge of sand was about three quarters of an inch high all along, except in the center. And right about there, in the center, it was pressed down."

"This pressed down section, about how large was it?" I asked.

" 'Bout the thickness of a man's arm below the elbow, sir. It looked like somebody had leaned ag'in it and fired a gun from the outside into the room."

This soldier was dismissed; others took his place. Man after man testified to the same thing. The lieutenant gazed steadily at me. Finally the sentry on duty that night was called, and I questioned him.

He testified that he had seen a man gallop away from the captain's house. Could he identify the man?

"Yes, sir, that was him, right there!" and he pointed to Broken Thumb Peters, who had turned white as the evidence began to pile up against him.

There was not much more testimony needed. Without leaving their seats, the coroner's jury gave it as their opinion that the deceased "had met his death at the hands of Jack Peters, known as Broken Thumb Jack," and recommended that said Jack Peters be remanded to the custody of the marshal for trial.

THEN the lieutenant invited them to stay for dinner and, while Broken Thumb Peters was placed in the guardhouse for safekeeping, a big table was spread at headquarters and bottles of whisky appeared from the stores and belts were loosened and the sternness of those Border men relaxed.

I found occasion to congratulate the lieutenant on his handling of the whole situation.

"Some of it was pure bluff," he admitted, "and some of it was law. I told you I have specialized in law," he answered absently. "Somehow I seem to hit it off better as a lawyer than an Army man."

During the height of the feast, I slid out and sought Sergeant Rawlins. We spoke low voiced for a minute or two and then Sergeant Rawlins accompanied me to the guardhouse. Once there, he dismissed the sentry on duty and we entered Jack Peters' cell.

Sergeant Rawlins had the key to his irons. They were unlocked.

"There's a horse outside. Get on his back and slide out of here as fast as the Lord will let you!" growled the sergeant. "And don't ever show up in this country as long as you live!"

Broken Thumb Peters was astonished, but not too astonished to take advantage of this sudden freedom.

And that, gentlemen [concluded the doctor] is the story of my first patient and how I was led into being accessory to a murder, into house breaking and subornation of perjury.

* * *

The doctor beamed at us mildly and sipped his drink as we leaned forward, intense and curious.

Judge Banfield was the first to speak.

"Some very interesting points illustrating the conflict between civil and military jurisdiction," he said weightily, as he placed the tips of his fingers together. "But, of course, conditions in that Border could not be cited as a basis upon which to establish precedents. But what I can not understand is why you freed this man Broken Thumb Peters after he was found responsible for the death by this coroner's jury?"

"Because he wasn't guilty," explained the doctor mildly.

"But how about the testimony of the one shot having been fired from the captain's revolver? And the ridge of sand on the window sill?" other voices spoke up.

"I'm afraid that's where the subornation of perjury comes in," explained the doctor. "You see, I pressed my own arm into that ridge of sand—and, while examining the revolver, I slipped out an empty cartridge from the chamber and put in a fresh one, taking it from the dead captain's belt!"

"So the lieutenant really killed the captain after all!"

"I'm afraid so," returned the doctor, as the babble of discussion broke forth.

"But what interests me at the moment," boomed old Tewkebury, "is, when do we eat? The doctor's Wild West story has made me hungry as a bear!"

"John Granville is on his way up here now, from the mayor's party, being escorted by a motorcycle squad," explained Hughes.

Old General Shattuck had been a quiet listener to the doctor's story, nodding from time to time during the tale. Now he hitched his chair nearer.

"I was on duty as paymaster down at Laredo when that all happened," he said, and we grew silent. "Wasn't that captain's name Mannheimer?" he asked.

The doctor looked up sharply.

"It might have been," he said, caution in his voice.

"Yes, it was. I remember now, he was about to be tried by courtmartial for irregularities in his accounts. He was very deeply involved, as I remember. Then the next thing we knew he was dead, shot by some Border ruffian. I don't remember the lieutenant however, except that a youngster serving under Mannheimer resigned not long afterward. What ever became of him I don't know." The old general shook his head in an effort to recall.

"But why did the captain haze the sergeant so heartily?" asked some one.

"Sergeant Rawlins told me that he had known all along of the captain's peculations. Evidently the captain was afraid of him," returned the doctor.

More questions were on every one's tongue but they were interrupted by the shrieking of police sirens outside and a rattle and clatter on the street before the clubhouse. We went to the window and saw a distinguished looking man in full evening clothes stepping out of an official car. He was very assured in manner and bearing and his impeccable courtesy in rendering thanks to the police escort was a model of its kind.

"Here comes our guest," said some one, and fresh cocktails were brought out. In another minute he was among us, a tall, fine looking chap with a shock of iron-gray hair. Each of us in turn was introduced to him, while he made apologies for his tardiness, until at last he came to Dr. Phillips.

"Doctor Kingdon Phillips?" inquired our guest. The doctor nodded. "You don't remember me, Doctor?" he said. The doctor looked puzzled.

The newcomer laughed in friendly fashion.

"Well, you should, Doctor. I started you on the road to fame. Why, Doctor, I was the man who brought you your first patient!"

A silence fell on the room as we stared at this man. Then, puzzled at our astonishment, his hand went up to his shock of hair and he ran his fingers through it. It was a peculiar motion that he made, with all four fingers spread out as he ran them through the heavy locks; then, as he completed the motion, he drew the four fingers together, as a man will close the blades of a pair of scissors.

"Gentlemen, dinner is served!" announced the steward.

A NIGER MYSTERY

By T. SAMSON MILLER

A FEW YEARS ago there came to me through *Adventure* a very indignant letter from a government official of British Nigeria. The official, an *Adventure* reader, took me to task in no gentle manner for what he asserted to be the entirely false topography of an African story of mine. He stated to the editor that I could not have been in the place that was the setting for my story.

He was able, he said, to give proof that there was no village, such as I had described, on the north bank of the Niger, and no village of the name I had given anywhere in the district. Furthermore, I failed to mention a village of another name directly across the river from where I had located the non-existent settlement.

It so happened that I had had charge of a trading station close to the village described in my story. I often walked from the station to the village. I did not take canoe and cross the river to a village. In fact, there was no village across the river. Yet the indignation of the official precluded any possibility of deliberate lying. Moreover his letter was addressed from the district, so he must have known what he was saying.

For years I have been puzzled; for years my veracity has been under a cloud, my attention to topographic details impugned. I have racked my brains for a theory that would account for a village disappearing from one bank of the Niger and a village appearing where there had been none. That there could be any connection between the disappearing village and the appearing village was made improbable by the fact that the villages bore different names and, as my indignant correspondent pointed out, the blacks of the village in my story were in appearance entirely unlike the blacks of the village which I had neglected to mention. The blacks in my village shaved their heads to a center tuft, for one thing, whereas those seen by my correspondent had heads covered with the usual woolly kinks of the negro.

The explanation came to me recently. By one of those freakish chances I met in San Francisco a man who had been in charge of the trading station a few years after me. I brought up the matter of the confusion of the villages. He laughed.

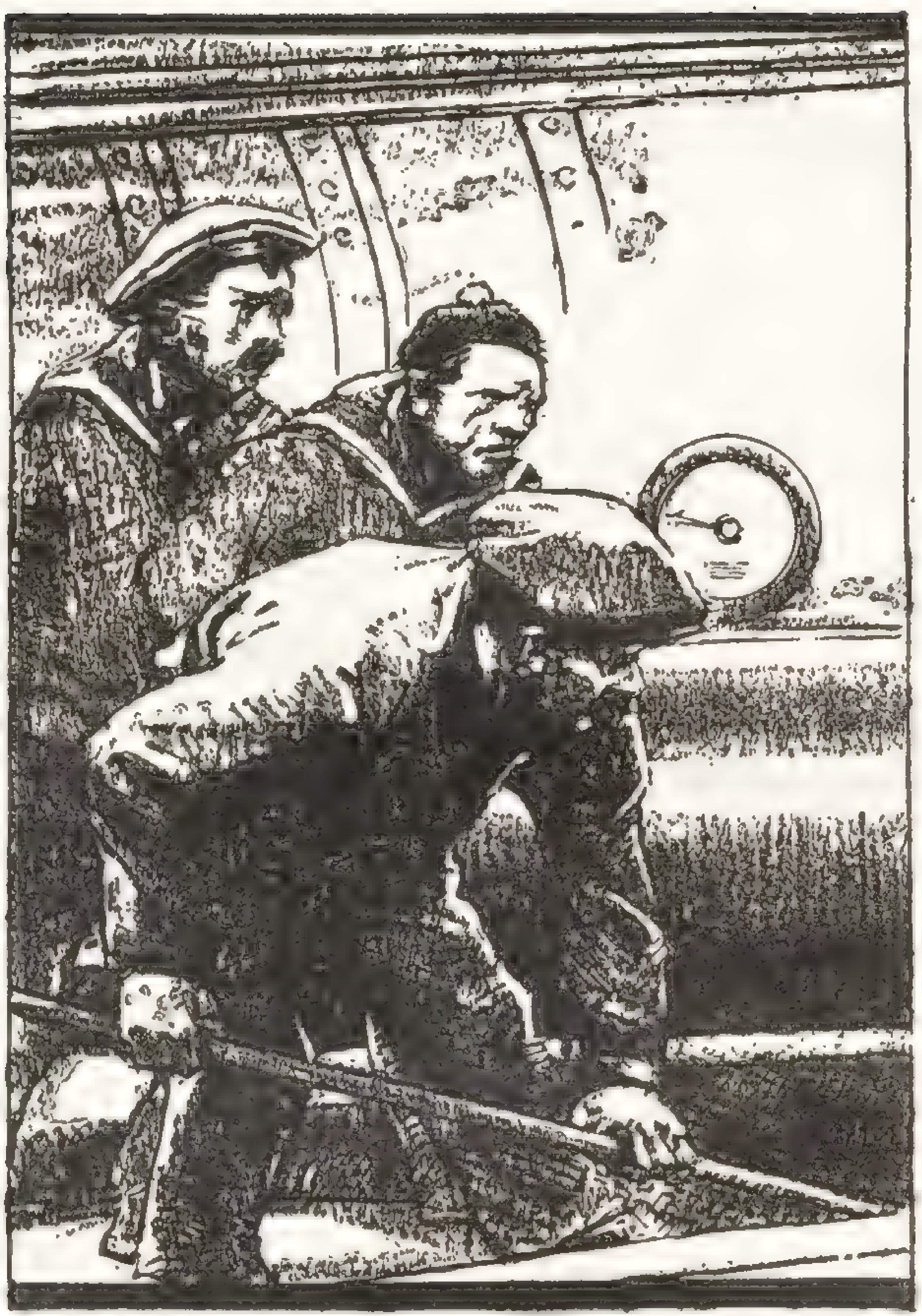
"That's easy. You ought to have guessed—you who know blacks. The village *was* on the north bank, and the people *did* shave their heads to a center tuft, and the place had the name you mentioned. But there came to the village the spotted sickness. Now blacks take sickness to be obsession by an evil spirit. So many people died of the spotted sickness that it was plain that the village was plagued by evil spirits, and equally plain that the evil spirits had a grudge against the people of that village and were avenging the grudge.

"So the blacks burned the village to the ground and canoed across the river. There they built new huts with square roofs, quite unlike the conical thatches of the old village. They took a new name for the new village, and they let their hair grow all over their heads. Why? To fool those evil spirits—throw them off the track, lest they follow across the river and start their plaguing again."

WAR ZONE

By

COMMANDER EDWARD ELLSBERG



"PETE!"

"Yes, Biff." With an effort, Mullaney lifted his wet head clear of the water, twisted toward the half-submerged torpedoman clinging feebly to the waterlogged timber alongside him. "What is it?"

A wave broke over them, smothering the reply. Biff Wolters spat out a mouthful of salt water, waited a moment till in the trough of the sea he could get his face clear, then gasped:

"The lifeboat, Pete! Are we gainin' on it?"

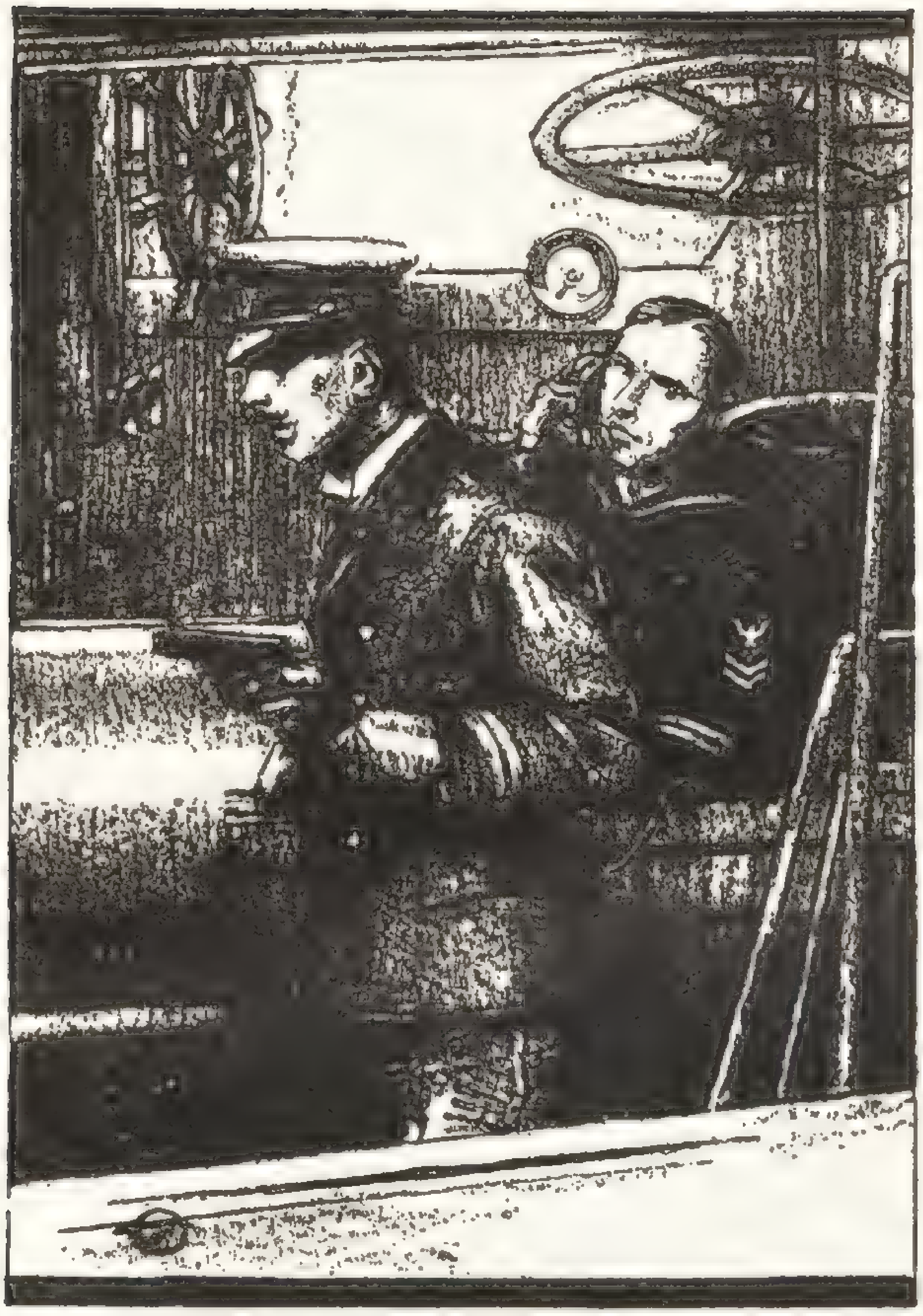
Pete Mullaney thrust his shoulders up from the sea as he rose to the next wave, stared hastily down to leeward, sank back again into the water to put as little weight as possible on the log to which he clung.

"I dunno, Biff. Sure, an' it's lucky we be if we're holdin' our own, what with that boat ridin' light as she is, an' the wind still strong."

He closed his mouth suddenly as a crest washed by, then started to paddle again with one arm, clinging tightly with his other arm to the barely buoyant timber.

Wolters gazed despairingly across the heaving seas at the distant lifeboat, started paddling again, kicking his legs out feebly to get more speed.

The setting sun, still an hour's height above the western horizon, cast a glare in their eyes, silhouetting against the sky in the brilliant path of light streaming across the waves to the two struggling seamen, an empty lifeboat half a mile away, riding high in the water, drifting



A Sequel to the Thrilling Submarine Novel, "Pigboats"

aimlessly to leeward before the wind.

Desperately the two swam on, pushing before them the timber to which they clung. A mile astern the ocean was dotted with such floating sticks, flotsam from the cargo of the torpedoed *Galway*, tossing sluggishly in the seas over the spot where the ill fated mystery ship had gone down.

Biff Wolters cast an agonized glance backward, caught a glimpse in the east of a low lying streak of smoke disappearing over the horizon there. He cursed inwardly. What business had that destroyer to be in such a damned hurry anyway? How his heart had leaped when first he sighted that foaming bow rushing up over the rim of the sea in answer to an SOS from the sinking *Galway*, and in a swirl of churning water, had seen the *Walton* stop to pick up the men in the *Galway's* lifeboats. And how quickly had hope died within him, when, casting the empty boats adrift, the destroyer with forced draft blowers roaring shrilly had swiftly disappeared in the direction of Ireland, hot on the trail of the invisible submarines, delaying not even a moment to search the débris of the wreck for the luckless castaways of the *L-20*.

The afternoon had been a nightmare to Biff. Hardly two hours before, he and Pete with their shipmates in the submarine *L-20*, had been quietly towing submerged astern of the *Galway*, waiting for some unwary U-boat to rise to the bait and torpedo their unsinkable timber-packed decoy; and when it had broken surface to inspect its victim, the

L-20, still submerged, was to be cast adrift by the *Galway* to torpedo the U-boat.

That was the scheme It had worked out beautifully before as a U-boat trap.

But this time everything had gone wrong. The *Galway,* her machinery spaces blown wide open by a torpedo from the *U-38,* had started to sink in spite of her holds packed with lumber. Before the dazed crew of the *Galway* could let go the towline, their ship was half awash and sinking rapidly. In a panic they had taken to the lifeboats. And to save itself from being dragged to the bottom when its decoy sank, Lieutenant Knowlton, skipper of the *L-20,* had brought his hidden boat hurriedly to the surface to sever that fatal towline. And that had been the start of their misfortunes.

Biff and Pete, sledge and chisel in hand, had scrambled out the hatch in the conning tower of the *L-20* to cut the steel hawser when, off to starboard, the *U-38,* complacently watching the sinking of its defenseless victim, was startled into sudden activity by the apparition of an enemy submarine. Hastily it went awash while Biff and Pete hacked away with chisel and sledge at the strands, then circled round, and headed in to torpedo the *L-20.*

BIFF gazed dully at the raw flesh that had been his hands, smarting from the salt soaking into his wounds. Mechanically one swollen paw gripped the log which held him up, the other swung ceaselessly through the water driving him toward that boat. Both hands were long since numbed. Torn, first by the sharp wires which had blossomed suddenly out like porcupine quills as he fumbled to hold his chisel down on the partially cut strands of that hawser; then suddenly mashed when Pete, thrown off his balance by the erratic rolling of the *L-20,* had missed the chisel and brought the sledge down on his bleeding hands instead.

It was then that his skipper had shouted to let the last strand go, to get back inside the submarine. And with a curse he had ignored the order, gripped the chisel in his shapeless hands, called out to his shipmate swaying crazily on the narrow bow of the plunging boat:

"C'mon, Pete, for God's sake, hit it! What you waitin' for?"

Pete had steadied, poised the sledge, was starting to swing, when the deck under them plunged into the depths and left them floundering in the sea. Biff remembered vaguely letting go his useless chisel as he started to swim. The tapering periscope of the *L-20* had hit him a glancing blow as it shot by him. Pete had grabbed it, clung futilely a moment till it dragged him under, then let go and come gasping to the surface.

A streak of bubbles ripped through the waves where the *L-20's* periscope had just vanished. The torpedo! For one paralyzing instant Biff held his breath, stopped swimming, waiting the explosion that would destroy the submarine and send him hurtling skyward in a roaring geyser of water.

The path of bubbles lengthened out beyond, and Biff's heart resumed its beating. Lieutenant Knowlton's quick action had won; the torpedo had passed harmlessly over the hull of his boat.

But the *Galway* also had now disappeared. Biff forgot his own situation. Horror stricken, he visualized the fate of the *L-20.* The German torpedo had missed. But he and Pete had failed to part the last strand of that deadly steel hawser which held the submarine to the hulk of the *Galway.* Somewhere in the depths beneath him, he saw his shipmates being dragged deeper and deeper by the sinking ship till the sides of the *L-20,* no longer able to withstand the increasing pressure, folded suddenly in on the doomed crew. He groaned. If only he and Pete had gotten in one more good wallop on that cable!

A hundred yards off, the waves began to boil like a huge cauldron; almost on end, the tapered stern of the *L-20* burst from the sea, propellers revolving madly, useless diving rudders wobbling futilely in the air. For an instant the hull hung poised vertically half out of the water, then the stern swung swiftly downward, the boat leveled off awash, the whirling propellers got a grip on the water, and before Biff could clearly realize that his submarine had broken free of her entanglement, it had submerged again; and his last glimpse of his old ship was of the shining tip of her periscope vanishing in the waves.

All that only two hours ago! It seemed years. Biff's tired legs kicked spasmodically, his weary arms paddled mechanically. That empty lifeboat dancing on the waves out there like a mirage.

Silently he pushed ahead, felt Pete's legs thrashing alongside him. Swimming to leeward: some comfort that, anyway. The long ocean waves at least were not breaking in his face. Doggedly he swam, catching a glimpse of the boat as he rose on each crest, fighting to close the gap before night fell and the boat vanished in the darkness.

Somewhere far astern of them now was the drifting wreckage of the *Galway*. Miles away to the eastward, the *L-20* and the *U-38* were playing a grim game of hide and seek in the ocean depths while on the surface the destroyer *Walton*, bearing the survivors of the *Galway*, was rushing up to lend a hand. Here, alone in the wide spread of gray water, the two abandoned sailors fought desperately to gain the haven of that tantalizing boat that represented a last slender grip on life.

The sun sank lower. Pete gaged the distance to the drifting shell; it seemed a little less. He turned on his side, gasped between strokes—

"Sure, Biff, an' we're gainin' on it."

The tired torpedoman sighted over the log, then swept his head round to windward, watched the waves a moment, nodded.

"O.K, Pete, you're right. An' the reason—" he paused till his head came clear of the water again—"the wind's dyin' down with the settin' o' the sun. She ain't driftin' away so fast now."

Encouraged a little at this success, they struck out harder. Biff's aching hands alternated resting on the log as he pushed it ahead of him. A few more minutes, then Biff quit swimming, looked dubiously at the sinking sun.

"It ain't no use, Pete. We'll never catch 'er. Breastin' this log's too much work. I'm gonna let go an' swim for it."

Pete's bloodshot eyes blinked at him.

"Don't, Biff, for the love o' God! The log's holdin' us up fine. Hang on with me an' we'll make it yet."

"Naw, I can't. My hands 're all shot. They're no good for hangin' on."

He let go, ducked under the timber, came up puffing on the far side.

"'By, Pete. If I make it, I'll come back for you. If not, remember me to your Maggie!"

He waved a bloody hand at his shipmate, turned over and, free now of the drag of his float, swam desperately away.

Dully Pete watched his progress. Maggie! If Biff didn't make it, a fine chance he'd have himself of ever seeing Boston and Maggie again! Damn those pigboats! To hell with the whole war, anyway! Maggie! He might long ago have been married to Maggie and living off the fat of the land on his wages as a riveter. He took a fresh grip on his log, kicked out violently. He blew out a mouthful of water, settled grimly to his task. Why, for the love of God, had he ever listened to Tom Knowlton's blarney and joined the Navy? All right for Knowlton—he was an officer now. And maybe for Biff, too. They were sailors anyway. But he, Pete Mullaney, belonged ashore, and if he ever got his feet on land again . . .

Wearily his legs splashed the water, he lifted his shoulders clear as he rose to the next wave. Biff's head, a dark spot against the gray waves, was bobbing in the sea half a shiplength off already. And there on the crest of a wave dancing against the huge red disk of the setting sun was the lifeboat. Pete watched anxiously as the minutes lengthened out and the sun set. The whitecaps vanished from the waves, the wind died down in the growing dusk, the drifting boat, barely visible now in the afterglow, gradually lost headway in the slackening breeze. Would Biff overhaul it before darkness blotted it from sight and left him swimming aimlessly till his strength gave out and the waves swallowed him up?

II

CROUCHED in the sternsheets, Mullaney clung to the long steering oar, held the clumsy lifeboat as close to the wind as he dared. Lashed to the forward thwart, another oar thrust its blade above the gunwales, an improvised mast from which fluttered a strange sail—a baggy mat full of holes, formed of a dozen kapok lifebelts which Biff with infinite labor had woven together, spread by another oar seized firmly along the bottom as a boom.

Sprawled full length on the after thwart, Biff tended the sheet, his eyes roving anxiously from the crazy sail to his shipmate in the stern.

"Steady as she goes, Pete! Don't head no closer or she'll make nothin' but leeway!"

Mullaney, fighting to keep the heavy steering oar well immersed as the boat rode clumsily through the water, looked down morosely.

"Steer yourself if you're not satisfied. Sure, an' what difference does it make whether she goes sideways or for'd?"

"Wouldn't you rather see Ireland than Africa, Pete?"

"Anything but these damn waves'll suit me. When I was hangin' to that log, I was thinkin' could I ever make this boat, sure I'd be satisfied for the rest o' me life. But it's just prolongin' the agony. One more day o' hangin' to this oar an' I'll jump overboard. Oh, for some water!"

Biff licked his cracked lips, shook his head.

"Wouldn't you think they'd have kept a water breaker in a lifeboat! Sailors, hell! There ain't none no more. Must 'a' been a lot o' farmers on the *Galway*. No water, no food, no nothin' in this boat but oars! Not even sails! An' us a good hun'erd miles offshore. A fat chance we got to use oars. I couldn't hold a cigaret with me hands now, let alone pull an oar!"

He looked gloomily from the line wound round his swollen wrist to the makeshift sail, then for the hundredth time his eyes searched the floorboards. Nothing but lifebelts and more oars under the thwarts; no abandon-ship rations, no water breakers. His parched tongue licked his dry lips again; feverishly his bloodshot eyes turned upward toward the sky. No clouds, no sign of rain, only the brilliant sun beating down on the open boat. Two days now without water.

Exhausted, Biff had caught the boat and, after a fierce struggle, every move of which was a torture to his bruised hands, he had hauled himself in over the gunwale. And then disregarding his agonized hands, he had seized an oar, sculled slowly in the black night up to windward seeking in the tumbling seas for his shipmate, till Pete, guided by his shouts, had found the boat in the darkness and crawled in. Stretched out on the thwarts, soaked but thankful, they had rested their wornout bodies, sleeping fitfully while the tossing boat drifted aimlessly under the stars.

Stiff, aching in every limb, dawn found them searching the boat eagerly for water, and then after the first deadening shock at finding not a drop, saw them turning with heavy hearts to the task of rigging from the useless lifejackets a sail for their battle to make land.

Slowly the lifeboat breasted the seas. Broad of beam, shallow in draft, designed only to float the maximum number of passengers without capsizing, intended only for propulsion under oars, Biff found the boat a terrible sailer; with no projecting keel to grip the water, he found to his dismay when at last their sail was hoisted and their boat cautiously headed on an easterly course, that their wake plainly showed they were making more leeway than headway and were moving off to the southeast in spite of themselves.

To compensate and hold a course due east for the nearest land the boat had to run closehauled; to Pete at the steering oar, fighting to hold the bow into the wind, the day had been a nightmare, the more so as Biff at every yaw had hastily to pay out his sheet lest their patchwork sail go by the board.

Biff's head slumped from the gunwale, lolled on the sheerstrake. His salty eyes rolled slowly over the waves to leeward, scanned hopelessly the far circle where sky and water met. A clear sharp line, unmarked by smoke, unbroken by mast or stack. He wondered vaguely what actual progress they were making, how many days he could withstand that burning thirst, restrain himself from leaping into those mocking cool blue waves and swallowing great gulps . . .

A tug on his wrist: the boat heeled sharply to leeward as she yawed, fell into the trough. Instinctively Biff paid out the sheet, eased the strain on the sail, cried out angrily—

"Whatcha think you're doin', Pete, drivin' rivets ag'in or sailin' a boat?"

Pete bore heavily down on his oar, brought the boat into the wind as they rose to the next crest, glared vindictively at the figure sprawled on the thwart.

"One more wisecrack about me steerin' an' I'll bean you with this oar!" Pete breathed heavily as he strained at the smooth ash handle. "You layin' there restin' yourself all day long while I bust me guts holding 'er up! You should be thankful I mashed your hands on that pigboat so's you don't have to stand a trick steerin' yourself. What d'ye think I am, a steerin' engine?"

BIFF heaved in the slack, watched his improvised boom come over the quarter as his sail flattened out, then hauled himself erect on the thwart.

"Pete, you could get a court-martial for that, threatenin' your superior officer in the performance o' his duty. In ordinary circumstances, as commandin' officer I should put you on bread an' water for three days, but as we ain't got none, I'm afraid I'll have to remit your punishment."

"Belay the blarney, Biff," growled Pete. "Punish me with bread an' water! Don't mention water to me or I'll bite you. When d'ye think we'll git somewheres?"

"At the rate we're goin', maybe a week. Think you can last that long, Pete?"

"A week!" moaned Pete. "Holy Mother, a week without water! Sure, an' you don't mean we gotta sail that long, Biff?"

"It's an offshore breeze, an' it's damn little this boat's makin' good 'agin it, Pete. Better pray for the wind to haul aft, or we'll be ravin' idiots before we raise the land!" He swept his eyes over the wide expanse of tossing seas.

Pete leaned weakly against his oar, stared disheartened at the waves bearing down on the port bow.

"A week!" he groaned. "Me throat's burnin' already like a hot rivet in the forge." A thought struck him. "Mebbe it'll rain soon an' save us yet."

He looked at the sky, clear, cloudless. Hopelessly his eyes fell, watched the waves again. He stiffened suddenly, dropped his oar, pointed wildly ahead.

"Look, Biff!"

Suddenly free of its helm, the boat swung off; the wind caught the fragile sail broadside, tore it from the mast, left it flapping in the waves. Cursing, Biff hauled the torn lifebelts in over the gunwale, looked hastily toward the stern.

"For God's sake, Pete, are you outa your mind already? You near lost our sail! Head her up, quick!"

But Mullaney, ignoring him, was leaning over the rail, staring as if hypnotized at the waves, while his steering oar slid gently over the stern and drifted away.

Biff made a wild grab for the oar, missed, cried hoarsely—

"You damned lubber, we're wrecked for fair now!"

He turned savagely on Mullaney as the drifting boat rolled helplessly in the trough of the sea, paused as he took in the tense figure of his silent shipmate, followed his gaze.

"For the love o' Mike!"

There in the waves, a shiplength off, a tiny wake showed in the sea, a tapering finger of steel cut sharply through the water, a shining lens gleamed at them, circled slowly round across their bows.

"A periscope!" breathed Biff.

A ripple broke the water a hundred feet ahead of the periscope, a jagged net cutter showed an instant, then the wake around the periscope widened out. In a welter of foam the top of a conning tower burst clear, followed in a moment by a black mass which showed like a small island between bow and bridge: the gun.

"She's comin' up," murmured Mullaney. "Praises be, we're saved!"

The remainder of the conning tower rose clear, then the deck came awash, and the sleek hull, with water cascading in torrents from the freeing ports in the superstructure, broke from the sea.

Startled by the sudden emergence of a ship, in the deserted ocean, Biff gazed transfixed as the submarine took shape. But when the boiling of the seas subsided round her black sides, he came back to life, took a look at her name, swore luridly.

"Saved, hell! She's a Hun. We're prisoners!"

"For a drink o' water, I'd join the Kaiser's navy." Mullaney started to wave frantically. "Sure, an' they'll pick us up, Huns 'r no Huns."

He stopped waving, seized an oar from under the thwarts, began sculling violently toward the black hull.

A hatch popped open on the *U-83*. An officer leaned over the side of the chariot bridge and surveyed them through lifted binoculars. Simultaneously, another hatch swung back in the deck just abaft the gun, a stream of armed men swarmed out on deck. Biff found himself looking down the muzzles of half a dozen rifles. He raised his arms in token of surrender.

Pete gave a final swift sheer to the oar, brought the lifeboat alongside with a bump, quit sculling and grabbed for the low rail of the U-boat to drag himself aboard.

"*Nein!*"

A stolid face scowled down at him, the butt of a musket drove viciously into Mullaney's chest. He suddenly flew backward, sprawled face up on the floor boards of the boat.

Biff's arms dropped. The muscles in his shoulders hardened and he leaped at Pete's assailant.

"Lay off him, you damned—" He paused sharply as a muzzle pressed against his head.

"*Verdammtes Schwein, komme nicht herein!*"

Slowly Biff raised his arms again, looked along the rail from face to face. Not a sign of sympathy there.

He turned, craned his neck to the chariot bridge towering over him.

"Water!" he begged hoarsely; then, remembering, "*Wasser, Wasser!*" He stared up at the officer leaning over the rail of the bridge. "If you won't take us aboard, for God's sake give us some water! Can't you see we're dyin' o' thirst!"

Biff thought he saw a gleam of interest in the face above as he spoke, wondered painfully if he had made the German understand. Possibly. The officer leaned farther over the rail, scanned him from head to foot, then asked in English—

"Americans?"

Biff started in surprise at the question, then answered quickly:

"Sure, both of us. Reg'lar Navy."

The skipper's expression changed

sharply. A guttural command in German, the rifles pointing over the rail clattered to deck. A dozen arms were thrust toward them and Biff and Pete were dragged up the rounded side of the hull. A hard shove from a rifle butt and their lifeboat slid away, drifted clear of the U-boat.

Biff watched it bob away, then started for the open hatch abaft the gun.

"C'mon, Pete. Shake a leg before they change their minds an' heave us overboard. The water's down below."

III

"WELL, Pete, I dunno whether that two-striper believes us or not. What d'ye think?"

Biff Wolters leaned back against a tier of bunks in the after crew space, looked quizzically at his shipmate. The *U-83* rolled steadily underfoot, the pounding of her Diesels running full speed to charge the batteries shook the boat. A little forward of them a group of German sailors were clustered round a mess table swung down in place of an unshipped berth, watching intently a pair of dice rolling over the board.

"Shh, Biff, them boys'll hear you." Pete looked uneasily at the players hardly six feet away.

"Not a chance. With all the noise them engines make, you're lucky if you can hear yourself think. An' besides, they can't understand English."

"Sure, an' you're right about the hearin'. These pigboats are all alike, ours or the Hun's. I wouldn't wish me worst enemy nothin' worse 'n tryin' to sleep with them damned Diesels poundin' away all night. An' speakin' of enemies, you see the big Dutchman rollin' them bones? He's the one fetched me a crack with his rifle. I've learned his name—Heinrich Kranz. I'll break his head for him yet if I have to come back to Germany when the war's over to do it."

Pete rubbed his bruised chest, glanced vindictively at his burly assailant, and continued cautiously, "But about them not understandin' English—don't you be too certain, Biff."

"Don't worry, Pete," muttered Wolters. "Outside the skipper, this crew don't talk nothin' but Dutch. But do you think the skipper swallowed that yarn I spun him?"

"Mebbe. It sounds likely enough, us bein' just part o' the armed guard detail on the *Galway,* an' not even knowin' what sunk us 'ceptin' it musta been a U-boat."

"You backed me up in great shape, Pete, describin' how we fought our gun till the ship sank under us. Here we been shipmates all these months an' I never give you credit for no more imagination than a dummy warhead loaded with wood."

"Anyway, 'tis lucky for your story that we got below to the scuttlebutt before the skipper got to workin' on me. If he'd got me first an' started cross-examinin' me with that scuttlebutt starin' me in the face an' me just burnin' up for a drop o' water, hiven help me, Biff, I would 'a' traded everything I knew for a drink."

"Well, this Herr Lieutenant von Karchen is all at sea over what's become o' his sidekick, the *U-38,* that he ain't heard from now for three days From the way he keeps quizzin' us, he's worried to death, Pete, over what's happenin'; I'll bet he'd give his right arm an' that Iron Cross he's wearin' to find out. This business o' U-boats disappearin' is wearin' on the nerves o' these lads; they're gettin' jumpy."

"An' why not?" demanded Pete. "Ain't that trap Tom Knowlton worked out towing submerged astern a decoy accounted for half a dozen o' them U-boats already?"

Biff nodded.

"Right! But now it's up to us not to give Tom's scheme away to these Dutchmen. So remember, we was just gobs in the armed guard on the *Galway,* an' we ain't even seen the U-boat that sunk us, let alone knowin' nothin' that happened to her afterwards. All we seen was just a periscope, which we kept popping away at till our ship sinks an' we finds ourselves swimmin' for an empty lifeboat."

"Yes, 'tis sure a fine yarn, but we'd better begin rememberin' some likely things about the *Galway,* for this ain't a marker to the questionin' we'll get when this U-boat comes into Bremen an' the sea-lawyers starts to take a crack at us. For instance, take that ratin' badge on your coat; you're a chief torpedoman. How'll you explain a torpedoman on a tramp's gun crew when it should be a gunner's mate?"

"Easy, Pete; but I'll wait till we hit Deutschland before I go losin' sleep over that."

"Well, 'tis lucky we are the rest o' this crew don't talk to us; it's hard enough goin' round here pretendin' I never seen the inside o' a pigboat before, let alone havin' to talk that way with all these Heinies. Say, Biff, where'll we sleep?"

"Standin' up against a stanchion, I guess," replied Wolters gloomily. "There ain't an empty bunk in the boat, an' I guess they won't let us caulk off in the passageways. Did you notice, Pete, these German pigs are worse'n ours. They're so chock-a-block with gadgets there's less room to get around than there was in the *L-20.*"

"Yeh, I took notice. An' I hope it does 'em some good gettin' us safe home to Germany. You don't want to forgit it, Biff; whatever happens to this U-boat now happens to us. 'Tis lucky we be that with the *Galway* sunk there's no mystery ships floatin' round here to trap this boat. Hiven keep us clear o' them things on this cruise!"

Biff nodded soberly. Submarine work in wartime was dangerous enough attacking surface vessels and dodging destroyers, but if the *U-83* were to attack a decoy with a hidden submarine lurking astern of it, Pete was right. Heaven help them then!

Biff looked furtively at the group of dice players. For the moment, danger was forgotten; the *U-83,* lying through the night on the surface charging batteries, felt herself safe. Only looks of avarice shone in the eyes of the flushed gamblers, guttural curses echoed across the table as the losers tossed their paper marks on the swaying board, saw them swept up after each roll by the burly Heinrich.

"What sorta game they playin', d'ye think, Biff?"

"I can't make it out, Pete, but what's the odds? Dice is dice. Gobs've been rollin' the bones ever since Noah shoved off in the Ark. Your friend Heinrich's some player. Watch him rake in the coin." Biff felt round in his pockets, then drew his hands out in disgust.

"Not a cent with me. Say, if I only had two-bits to start on, I'll bet you that by the mornin' watch I could 'a' rolled that guy for his whole wad."

IV

HERR Leutnant Otto von Karchen glanced anxiously at his chart of the North Sea. Between Scapa Flow in the Orkneys and Udsire Light off the coast of Norway ran a long rectangle marked out in red ink, stopping just short of the Light. That mine field had been traced in accurately two weeks before when he left Bremerhaven, according to the very latest data that the German Admiralty had been able to get from its intelligence agents scattered through the Norwegian fishing fleets. When he had gone out, that last ten mile gap of water had been clear.

But what had happened since? The Yankee minelayers were constantly working out of Scapa. Had they run another string of deadly eggs across the last stretch of open water barring the German Sea from the broad Atlantic beyond? He shuddered. Destroyers he could dodge, other surface warships he scorned, even the Allied submarines he might elude if his listeners kept alert at the microphones. But those mines! Floating silently in the cold depths, giving no warning, charged with three hundred pounds of TNT, needing but a slight scrape from his steel hull to loose a titanic blow that would crush his boat—how could human nerves continue to face that hazard? *Himmel!* What did the Kaiser expect of him?

He looked soberly at the red lines on the chart marking out the minefield. Perhaps for another cruise or two there would still be a gap. After that, straight through the zigzag rows of mines, those infernal eggs floating near the ocean floor with their long copper tentacles stretching upward to the surface to loose the hell below should one of those fine wires so much as graze his side. Could he stand that strain? Could he make his crew stand it?

Already it was becoming only too obvious their morale was cracking under the tension of unexplained mishaps to their sisters on the cruising grounds off Ireland. The *U-38,* Erhardt his friend—what had happened to them? And to the others which had silently faded from sight in the last two months? Perhaps his prisoners might tell—when the inquisitors in Bremerhaven got through with them.

Von Karchen glanced at the depth gage across his crowded control room. Sixty meters. Good. If there were mines in his path, it was at least probable he was below them, likely to foul at worst only their anchor cables, perhaps not set them off. Still these Yankee mines were devilish in their ingenuity; there was a rumor, true perhaps, floating around the submarine base at Bremerhaven that no longer was it necessary as with Allied mines actually to hit the mine case—contact even with the moorings would set these off. Who knew? He shrugged his shoulders fatalistically.

U-boat warfare was not what it had been before America entered the mêlée; convoys, destroyers, submarine chasers everywhere—no longer was it easy to sink even helpless freighters. This last cruise had been practically a failure. Every torpedo was gone, long range shots every one of them—and what had he in his log to show for it? One small Spanish tramp, a neutral at that, trying to creep unconvoyed into Liverpool; and these two Yankee sailors. Prisoners he had never before bothered with. If torpedoed seamen had boats, let them row till picked up, otherwise let them swim. Crowded U-boats had no place for them.

But these two intuitively he had suddenly decided to take prisoners; in spite of their stories, something in their plight made him certain they would be useful in unlocking the secret of the new Allied anti-submarine successes. How fortunate they had been not too far gone from thirst when he picked them up! Perhaps another Iron Cross, of the Second Class this time, might be his when the truth was wrung from them.

He looked aft through the round steel door into the after crew space, saw his prisoners dozing disconsolately against the bunk stanchions and laughed harshly. Did they think him a fool likely to swallow that story? Gun crew on the *Galway!* Ridiculous. They belonged on some Yankee submarine. That torpedoman's insignia—what had that to do with gun crews on tramps? And that pallor on both their faces. Who knew better than he, captain of a U-boat for three years, the ineradicable stamp of long months of service inside a U-boat, of bad air, of lack of sunlight, of acid fumes and biting chlorine gas?

They were submarine men, he could take oath on it. Good. How came they then to be drifting alone on the ocean in a lifeboat from the ship the *U-38* had just successfully torpedoed? And now the *U-38* was gone. *Ach, Gott!* He would choke that secret out of them, the answer to all the misfortunes of his brave shipmates!

Meanwhile at five knots the *U-83* swam silently on. At diving stations the crew nervously gripped their controls, instinctively set themselves to blow ballast tanks, twist diving planes for a sharp rise to the surface at the slightest concussion. Habit had not dulled in them the sharp edge of fear.

And at the wheel stood Heinrich Kranz, his roving eyes sweeping the curved iron walls of the U-boat, seemingly trying to peer beyond to search the cold depths outside for gray steel spheres, for shadowy shapes swaying gently to their anchor lines in the weird half light of the ocean floor; silently waiting—waiting only for the touch of his luckless submarine to erupt into flaming hell, smash in the fragile shell, crush out the life in his body.

WITH an effort, Kranz pulled himself together. He fixed his gaze on the compass, fought off the overpowering desire to swerve, to zigzag in and out among the unseen terrors. Instead he held steady on his course. Cold beads of sweat stood out on his forehead, his bloodshot eyes wandered unsteadily from compass to brightly lighted hull. Useless to maneuver; he might well steer into a mine rather than dodge one.

Slowly the minutes dragged by, lengthened into hours. The whir of fans, the low hum of the propelling motors were the only sounds as the *U-83,* sixty meters down, drove through the seas. In the control room anxious eyes glued to the clock on the switchboard watched till the hands finally touched two; then relaxed sharply. Six hours under—they had finally passed beyond the boundaries of the minefield. Tense fingers loosed their clutch on the valves, let go the diving controls.

At least, this time they were safely through; had they missed the mines, had they come through a still unmined gap—who knew? For this cruise, at any rate, they had returned unharmed into the German waters. Soon they could rise, and in comparative security hug the coasts of Norway and Denmark while they ran on the surface for the haven behind the guns of Helgoland.

Von Karchen glanced at the clock. He had made thirty miles to the southward since in a swirl of foam they had plunged below to assay the passage through that barrage of mines. His batteries were half discharged, the air was getting very thick. Two o'clock. They were clear of danger at last; there were still three hours of darkness. Now he could run on the surface, recharge his batteries again for emergencies; if possible, also boost the pressure in his air banks.

Uncomfortably he looked at the gage perched over the nest of heavy bronze plugs which comprised the high pressure air bank manifold. Only eight-hundred pounds left in the banks, hardly a third of his normal pressure. Would the worn-out pistons in his four-stage air charger buck up enough compression to force more in? Doubtful. Once in Bremerhaven, above all things the dockyard force must refit that air compressor before he dared start another cruise. Meanwhile he must do the best he could to restore the depleted banks. It was contrary to all submarine doctrine to run submerged with so small a reserve of air; even a full charge, not less than twenty-four hundred pounds, was hardly enough to blow ballasts in a pinch.

A sharp command: diving wheels whirled and at a steep angle the *U-83* planed toward the surface, the needle on the depth gage starting to drop. At twelve meters, periscope depth, the boat leveled off again. The captain pushed a switch. A harsh grinding noise broke through the stillness. A polished steel tube abaft the helmsman, which a moment before had seemed simply an ordinary stanchion on the centerline, began to move upward. A lens, a pair of training handles rose from a well in the deck, climbed steadily upward till they came eye high, stopped as the noise of the hoisting gear died out.

Stepping to the periscope, Von Karchen seized the handles, folded them outward, pressed his eye to the soft rubber shield. He looked eagerly out at the dark circle of sea and sky focused in the lens. Slowly he turned the handles, walked the periscope round the horizon, searching the surface before he blew his safety tank and came awash.

From bow to starboard beam, clear. From the beam aft to the starboard quarter, only the blackness of the heaving waves fading into the vague obscurity of a moonless night; still all clear—

Himmel! What was that dull red glow off the quarter? The moon rising? Impossible—not in the northwest. With an oath, Von Karchen stiffened perceptibly, stopped training round, twisted the periscope handle to throw in the high magnification. His field of vision narrowed suddenly, a formless mass stood out black against the sky, a tinge of red above it. A destroyer bearing down on them under forced draft, the flames from her boilers gleaming a dull red against the clouds of smoke pouring from her funnels!

Hastily the agitated skipper estimated the distance. No report had come from his microphone listeners; it must still be miles away, unaware of his presence. He had but to remain submerged and he was safe. In the darkness, no destroyer could ever make out the tiny wake of his periscope. At the speed she was making, in half an hour that destroyer would be hull down on his port bow. Then he could rise, clutch in his Diesels, float his waning batteries on the line for a charge while he steamed southward. But for the present—

"Steady at twelve meters!"

In surprise the seamen in the control room, about to bring the boat up, let go their valves, looked anxiously at their captain.

"A destroyer!"

In guttural whispers the word went round, then a gloomy silence fell again. A destroyer! They were used to dodging destroyers in the war zone; this one they could easily avoid. But to do it they must continue submerged. And the air was already foul from long continued rebreathing during their trip through the minefield. Muttered curses greeted the news. How much longer must they breathe this oil laden air?

IGNORING the grumbles all around him, Von Karchen watched as the distant mass hauled forward on his beam and stood out more distinctly. And then to his astonishment, astern of it he made out more shadows, caught the gleam of spray foaming under hurtling bows as a whole flotilla of destroyers steamed by him in the night, not half a mile away.

A brief interval in which he could plainly see the low destroyers silhouetted against the sky, funnels belching smoke, wakes boiling white against the inky darkness of the sea, then they drew ahead and vanished into the night. He drew a sigh of relief and prepared again to rise.

But his relief was short lived. As his periscope swung aft past the stern, searched forward on the port quarter, once more he picked up a gleam of fire in the sky. Another flotilla. Von Karchen began to wonder. A dozen destroyers at least, and in squadron formation. It could mean only one thing. The enemy was out in force. This was the destroyer screen scouting out ahead to cover the advance of heavy ships. He began to worry; the *U-83* dare not show herself on the surface under those circumstances. Who could tell from what direction the next flotilla of hurrying destroyers might burst from the night?

Hastily Von Karchen took his face from the rubber shield, blinked a little as his eye, strained from piercing the darkness, met the bright light of the control room. He turned toward the switchboard covering the starboard side of the room, scanned the intricate array of electrical dials there.

His batteries were discharging at a 2000-ampere rate. And the voltage was getting low, the storage cells were already half gone. But instead of coming up to recharge batteries, he was faced with the prospect of having to run all day submerged to avoid enemy warships; he must economize his precious electricity. Curtly he nodded to the petty officer on the board.

"Slow!"

The control wheels moved up a notch, the ammeter needle surged toward zero, then steadied. At two knots, barely steerageway, the *U-83* crept along, while at the diving rudders the control men readjusted their planes to a steeper angle to keep the boat submerged. The captain checked the new ammeter reading, nodded approvingly. At that discharge rate, the batteries would last for thirty hours more, if necessary. But the air! It was getting impossible. He must freshen it or his crew would soon be groggy.

Regretfully he gave the order to the seaman on the air manifold to bleed air from the banks into the boat. A twist of a key, a hissing noise and the reducing valve frosted slightly as a current of cool air started to whistle into the control room. Eardrums distended, the men started to swallow rapidly as the pressure in the boat rose while that in the banks fell. Von Karchen watched the aneroid barometer; when it had risen four inches, he called:

"Enough! Pump down!"

The captain watched the barometer, looked out occasionally through his periscope. It was still dark, though in the east the first hint of dawn tinged the sky. He could pump air overboard with impunity in the darkness; in the daylight it would be fatal with enemies around to leave such a wake of air bubbles, a perfect guide for a hail of depth bombs from pursuing vessels.

Three times he blew down his banks, three times pumped overboard the excess air. Inside the boat, the atmosphere freshened perceptibly and the drowsy crew brightened somewhat. But the captain, looking in perturbation at the air gage, shook his head when the man at the valves looked at him inquiringly for a fourth blow. Only four hundred pounds left instead of the twenty-four hundred pounds that they should be carrying for safety. He dared use no more.

Slowly the *U-83* swam to the southward as the dawn broke and revealed to Von Karchen's startled gaze an ocean full of ships! Far ahead was still discernible the smoke of the destroyer screen. On his starboard side, heading southward, was a line of light cruisers, steaming *en echelon;* astern of them broad off the quarter, a sight which caused his heart to thump violently. The Cat Squadron—Beatty's battle-cruisers—steaming majestically in column not half a mile away: The *Lion, Tiger, Indomitable, Princess Royal.* And following in their wake the four *Queen Elizabeth's,* British largest battleships, with their massive fifteen-inch guns standing out stark against the morning sky.

Eye glued to his periscope, Von Karchen gazed in anguish at the spectacle. The enemy's biggest ships within easy range, his boat in a perfect position for attack, the dream of every U-boat captain! A chance for fame, his name ringing through the Fatherland for a deed beside which the Weddingen exploits in sinking three old cruisers would fade into insignificance—and there he lay in the *U-83* without a single torpedo left!

His fingers trembled as he clutched the handle of his useless firing pistol, and one by one saw the tripod masts come dead on the intersection of the crosshairs etched on his periscope lens as the lordly battleships steamed by—*Queen Elizabeth, Barham, Malaya, Warspite.* And Admiral Beatty, Britain's commander-in-chief, with four-starred flag streaming in the wind, leading all in the *Lion!* It was more than man could stand. His eyes blurred, his lids closed to blot out the agonizing sight.

A tug at his sleeve. He opened his eyes and looked round. The radio operator, white faced, shaking, stood at his elbow.

"Herr Kapitan! In the microphones! Loud propeller noises! A whole fleet at least!"

Von Karchen nodded wearily.

"Ja, Schmidt. I see them. Battleships, cruisers, destroyers—everything. We can do nothing but hide." He paused, glanced about. From the torpedo room forward, the engine room aft, the control room room around him, he saw anxious faces watching. *"Die Englische Flotte!"* he announced bitterly. "Stand by!" He punched a button viciously. The periscope began to sink into the well in the deck.

"Bruckner!"

Unter-Leutnant Bruckner, second officer, who had left his post in the engine room and was loitering near the switchboard, his hopes for an invitation to look out the periscope now dashed, saluted stiffly and looked expectantly at his commanding officer.

"Take the boat down again to sixty meters and head southeast at slow speed." Mechanically the captain instructed him. "I am turning in for a few hours till this fleet disappears. Call me at eight; before that if we lose the noise of enemy propellers in our microphones."

"Ja, Herr Kapitan."

A little sick at heart, Von Karchen returned his salute, squeezed past the helmsman, pushed aside the curtain of his tiny stateroom and sprawled out on the bunk. Vaguely he heard a harsh order. The bow trimmed down, the *U-83* planed into the depths.

V

"BIFF, if ever we get clear o' this, you won't get me inside another pigboat with nothin' less'n a whole regiment o' leathernecks pushin' me through the hatch. We should 'a' stuck to that lifeboat."

"Belay the bellyachin', Pete. Did the Heinies ask your opinion when they first rammed you in the guts with a rifle butt an' then heaved you aboard? An' besides, wasn't you dyin' o' thirst an' willin' to join the Kaiser's navy for a drink? Well, you got your wish; here we're shipmates with the Huns for this cruise, anyway."

"Yes, but it won't be for long. Sure, it's dyin' o' suffocation we'll all be instead o' thirst. An' faster, too—you can last much longer without water than without air. Remember what happened in the *L-20* off Helgoland, Biff? Lord keep us from goin' through that ag'in!"

"I ain't forgot nothin'," answered Wolters briefly. "An' we sure better stand by for trouble here. The skipper's plans are all fouled up." The weary torpedoman peered through the round door in the dished steel bulkhead separating them from the control room. "I been keepin' an eye on that radio booth. The operator in there's scared stiff; you can tell each time he pops his head out he's still hearin' them propellers. This skipper may be good, but he just can't shake them ships on the surface."

"An' why not? Them ships up there don't even dream we're around; it should be easy for a good skipper. Sure an' I'll bet Tom Knowlton could lose 'em!"

"I dunno, Pete. There's lots o' ships topside an' they don't seem to be in a hurry to go nowhere in particular; just steamin' around to keep movin' so's they don't make too easy targets for any lurkin' U-boats. It we wasn't all in the same boat, I could die laffin'. Them ships on the surface could just as well cut out the zigzaggin' an' save their coal; the only U-boat lurkin' in these parts would sure thank 'em if they'd only keep goin' in a straight line long enough to get the hell away from here so's it could come up an' get a whiff o' some fresh air."

"Yes, but they ain't searchin' for us; they don't even know we're here. You'd think with the speed they make they'd be outa sight an' sound hours ago. What's the matter?"

"I dunno." Wolters' tired knees

sagged and he slid down into the passageway. He leaned back against the steel shell of the boat, tried to draw his legs up to leave a path in the cramped space. "Mebbe them ship's ain't headed nowhere, just cruisin' round in this vicinity. Chances are the mine layers 're out now runnin' another string of eggs across that lane we come through. An' these battlewagons 're out to protect 'em; they'll be steamin' round these parts till they get a radio that Cap'n Belknap an' his bunch of converted excursion boats they're droppin' the mines from is all through an' started back for their base in the Pentland Firth."

"An' when might that be, Biff?" Mullaney took a fresh grip round a bunk stanchion, looking dully down at the half recumbent figure of his shipmate.

Wolters shrugged his shoulders.

"All day, I s'pose." He listened to the low hum of the main motors coming faintly from aft. "Our propellers 're barely turnin' over. Must be savin' the juice. We'll never get clear at this speed."

And in the tiny radio booth, Lieutenant Von Karchen, who for three hours had sat hunched up over the receiving panel with a pair of headphones clamped tightly over his ears, was beginning to come to the same conclusion. He had zigzagged the *U-83* on three different courses while holding as well as possible to his base course southeast; but so far as he could judge, there were ships everywhere. At eight, Bruckner had called him as ordered; he had speeded up to five knots and run till ten, hoping to draw clear. But two hours at that speed had failed to take them out; still he caught the high pitched roar of whirling screws as he listened. The drain on the batteries was too severe to continue; with a heavy heart, he had cut the speed to the absolute minimum.

Now at one knot they hardly crept along, with difficulty maintained their sixty meter depth. And all the while he heard the whine of propellers circling overhead, the sound swelling in volume as a ship approached, dying out as it raced away. It was easy to distinguish them—the shrill note of the destroyer screws rang high pitched in the microphones, almost unbearable as it rasped his ear drums; the heavy booming of the huge wheels on the battle cruisers reverberated like the surf pounding steadily against the shore; occasionally came an intermediate rumble like the beating of distant drums—a light cruiser was passing overhead.

And slowly in the calm depths the submarine swam along, struggling to escape, a ghostly shape vaguely discernible in the semi-darkness, wholly unseen, unsuspected by the flotillas constantly maneuvering on the surface, but constantly haunted by the throbbing of the screws that echoed through the seas, beat upon the smooth steel sides of the *U-83*, roared in the microphones against the eardrums of her commander.

VON KARCHEN tore off the headset, rose unsteadily. He squeezed out of the tiny booth, wormed his way past the galley and the silent seamen standing by the levers of the open kingston valves. Coming abreast the switchboard, he saw Bruckner's haggard eyes staring at the voltmeters. The captain thrust himself between the housed periscope and the helmsman, followed Bruckner's glance.

"Weak, *nicht wahr?*"

"Very low, Kapitan. That last spurt was bad; we can keep on now only four hours more even at this speed. Then the batteries are finished."

Von Karchen tried to think; his head ached, his eardrums pained him, his eyes throbbed as, with an effort, he focused them on the switchboard meters to verify his engineer's comments. Yes, Bruckner must be right; for fourteen hours they had been running on the electric motors, ever since eight o'clock the night before. And a good part of the time at fair speed for a vessel submerged. Now the end of their charge was in sight.

Four hours more at one knot—only four more miles to the southeast. It would get them nowhere, leave them perhaps with hardly enough current to run the lights, operate their controls.

No, they could remain underway no longer; they must bottom till their enemies departed—or till the night fell.

Von Karchen stepped hurriedly past the switches, leaned over the chartboard hinged down alongside his gyro compass panel, seized a pair of dividers, hurriedly stepped off the distance they had made good since morning. He brushed his hand across his dizzy eyes to clear them, stared intently at the tiny figures printed on the chart nearest to the penciled circle that marked their position. Eighty-two meters, two hundred and seventy feet. *Gott sei dank,* they were now on soundings!

He twisted round, glanced to port at the diving wheels. Both forward and aft the wheels were at "hard dive", only the diving planes were holding them down, the boat slightly buoyant. That was correct; always the boat should be driven downward against a little tendency to float. But to get more depth he could expect no help now from the planes; they were already at full depression. Only by speeding up could he drive the boat lower. He hesitated to give the order; that would drain still further the precious electricity. For a moment he pondered; he might take in more water, get the boat negative, let her sink till she bottomed.

But if the chart were wrong, the water deeper than he thought? He dared not go below ninety meters—the *U-83* could not stand a greater pressure. Planing down was the only safe way. If he did not find the bottom at the depth expected, a slight easing of the diving rudders and they need go no lower. But if the boat were sinking heavy, and started to go too far, it was a question whether he could pump ballast fast enough to catch the boat in time, questionable even if with the low air pressure remaining in his banks he could blow his safety tank rapidly enough. His aching head fumbled with the problem. Everything was dangerous. Again he focused his throbbing eyes on the chart. For several miles around the depth was constant: eighty-two meters. He would chance it.

"On the flood valves, there! Half a ton of water more in the regulating tank!"

The order rang sharply through the stillness of the control room; all around groggy seamen straightened up unconsciously, stood by their valves, then slowly relaxed again as it penetrated their sluggish minds that the order was not for them—all except Obermayer, the man on the flooding manifold. He looked stupidly across the room, afraid he had misunderstood, hesitated to act.

"*Dummkopf!*"

Bruckner jumped across the little room, pushed him aside, hurriedly swept his hands across the complicated manifold, opening this valve, shutting that, till at the end of his manipulations the chest was open to the sea, closed against all tanks but the high pressure regulating tank under the control room deck, and open only a crack even to that one.

Anxiously Bruckner watched as the sea pressed through, the water gradually rising on the indicator scale. Behind him he heard another order.

"On the air banks! Stand by to blow the safety tank!"

He felt the seaman forward of him working on another manifold. Good. Their captain was a careful submarine man, always preparing for eventualities. But Bruckner did not look; with eyes glued to the indicator, fingers on the flood valve, he watched the water mark on the scale. The level rose. Nine hundred pounds. His fingers tightened on the wheel. One thousand. A twist, the valve was shut. He swung about hurriedly, faced the depth gage.

They were sinking. Fascinated, he gazed as the needle on the huge dial over the diving wheels swept slowly round: 65—70—75 meters. Every eye in the room followed its movement. Even Kranz at the wheel forgot his steering and stared over his shoulder at the depth gage. 80—still sinking. Out of the corner of his eye he saw the operator's fingers tighten on the blow valve, prepare to let the air rush through to the safety tank, blow its contents overboard to lighten ship in a pinch. 81—82—83. Bruckner saw the captain's face go suddenly gray, glance momentarily at the man on the air valves, swing back to the depth gage. 84—85 and then a gentle bump shook the boat. She listed slightly to port, the gage needle flickered, stopped. The boat had touched, still five meters inside her limit of safety.

Tense muscles relaxed; involuntarily a sigh of relief echoed all around the room. A brief order to the switchboard and the controllers swung back to neutral, the propellers stopped. The *U-83* was on the bottom.

Lieutenant Von Karchen, his head heavy from breathing the oppressive air, turned from the depth gage and looked anxiously at the clock.

Only half past ten in the morning . . .

VI

SLOWLY the minutes dragged by inside the *U-83*. Listless seamen lolled over the mess tables in the brightly lighted crew spaces, sprawled out in their bunks, leaned over the empty racks in the torpedo room. The main motors were stopped, even the whir of the ventilating fans was missing. Except for the labored breathing of the crew, the silence of the deep sea was unbroken.

In the radio booth Von Karchen sat hunched up before the receiving panel, headset over his ears, eyes closed, his face drawn and anxious, listening.

Bruckner peered in and asked a question. The captain looked up, considered a moment and shook his head.

"No, the cook can not use the galley range; it draws too much electricity. Cold meals only. And Bruckner, except in the control room, night lights only. Turn off everything else you can."

Bruckner saluted and turned away. Across the narrow passage was the galley; he poked his head through and instructed the cook:

"Fritz, no heat till we're up, understand? What can you do?"

"*Ja wohl,* Herr Leutnant." The cook shrugged his shoulders, looked into the tiny locker jammed in over the sink. "Canned wurst, canned bread."

He looked regretfully at the pot of coffee he was about to heat on the electric range. He wiped his hands on his dirty apron, fished a meager bag of coffee from the pot and carefully hung it up to drain.

Bruckner nodded. Probably no one was likely to care what rations were served out. Breathing, not eating, was the chief concern.

The interminable hours passed. Bruckner relieved his captain at the microphones for the afternoon, listened in dismay to the roaring of the propellers overhead, while apathetic sailors, munching chunks of hard bread, stared in from time to time, hoping against hope for the word that the enemy had left.

Four o'clock came and more hard wurst and harder bread were dished out and eaten. The atmosphere grew thicker; shoulders drooped, heads ached. Harsh whispers broke the silence, always the same question—

"How long till darkness?"

And always vehement curses greeted the reply. Would the sun never set?

Again the captain took the earphones. Bruckner, short and pudgy, dragged his tired body forward to his stateroom, poured out half a pitcher of water into the wash basin, plunged his head into it, attempted to quiet his throbbing temples. Useless. He flung himself on the bunk and lay panting. How much longer must they wait?

Five o'clock, then six. Two hours more and they could chance it in the late twilight, enemy or no enemy. Von Karchen, huddled over the receivers, cursed himself for the results of his caution. He might at least that morning have gone awash for a few minutes in the early dawn after sighting those destroyers without too great a risk of getting caught, might have renewed the air inside the hull before he plunged below even though it was evident he could not stay on the surface long enough to recharge batteries.

If only he had risked that, breathing now would not be quite so bad. Still, how could he have foreseen—how could any one have foreseen that a whole enemy fleet, instead of steaming on, would pick this very spot to patrol all day long, keeping him constantly under? And to make it worse, catch him unarmed and with such rundown batteries that, submerged, he could not maintain speed enough to draw clear?

Still came the hum of propellers, swelling, fading. Would the enemy leave soon, or would the rendezvous they were holding keep them here for days? It made no difference; in a few hours he must come up for air, even if after hurriedly ventilating the boat he had to plunge again to the bottom.

The noise in the microphones increased, swelled gradually to a mighty roar, terrible in volume, unbearable. Was he going insane, his mind breaking? The dazed captain tore the earphones from his head. The noise ceased. He rubbed his ears incredulously, gingerly slid the receivers part way back.

The vibration started again. No, it was not his imagination; the huge enemy ships were passing directly overhead, closer than they had ever been before, not three hundred feet distant; the beat of whirling bronze blades was throbbing against the thin sides of the *U-83;* thousands of times magnified by the microphones, it was thundering in his ears, deafening him. And then slowly it decreased as the ships steamed steadily onward and, to his astonishment and relief, grew constantly less, faded finally altogether, leaving a strange void in his consciousness after the reverberations which had nearly stunned him. He strained his aching ears, heard nothing. The enemy had disappeared at last. They could rise!

Off came the headset. He tossed it to Schmidt, the radio operator, and stumbled through the narrow door from the booth, swept the control room with a glance. Drooping figures leaned against the instruments, dulled eyes looked up hopelessly as his step broke the silence.

"All hands! Stand by to rise!"

The brusk command ripped through the room, startled the dozing figures like a cold spray. Heads lifted sharply; there was a brief scramble to take stations, the atmosphere seemed suddenly to have cleared. From forward and aft heads peered through the bulkheads, faces brightened as the word went quickly round:

"All clear above. We're going up!"

Unter-Leutnant Bruckner rolled from his bunk, pushed his way through the mob in the forward passage, looked inquiringly at his skipper.

"*Ja,* Bruckner, gone at last! Ready immediately on the Diesels. We will run slow on the surface, charge batteries as we go." The captain's gaze fell on the air gage. "Oh, yes. And start the air compressor immediately that we broach. The banks are almost empty."

"*Ja, Herr Kapitan.*" Bruckner hurried to the after bulkhead and disappeared on his way to the engine room.

Von Karchen took a last look round. Switchboard, controllers, steering wheel, diving rudders, drain manifolds, blow valves, kingstons—all were manned; and expectant faces watched him for orders. He grunted with satisfaction. Well had he trained this crew.

HE TOOK his own station abaft the periscope, glanced at the depth gage perfunctorily to get the exact reading so as to note when they started to rise. He must not lighten too much; the boat might rise out of control.

Eighty-eight meters. Taken aback,

Von Karchen rubbed his eyes, stared again at the gage. Yes, 88 meters. Queer. Probably he had not remembered correctly. Still he would have sworn it had registered 85 when they bottomed. Perhaps the gage spring had stretched under the pressure. He frowned, tried to think; but his aching head refused to function clearly. What difference, 85 or 88? They were coming up. He turned toward the drainage manifold.

"On the regulating tank! Obermayer, pump overboard a thousand pounds!"

The valves were set, a switch thrown, the high pressure pump began to groan as its pistons labored against the heavy sea pressure, sucking the water from the regulating tank, forcing it overboard through the sea cocks. Slowly the level fell on the indicator; as the pistons were small to allow them to work under such a head of water, the capacity of the pump was negligible compared to that of the low pressure bilge pumps, which, however, could work only close to the surface.

The waterline fell, reached the standard trim mark. Without orders, Obermayer stopped the pump. Von Karchen, eyes glued to the gage, poised himself for the order to start the main motors, drive ahead the instant the boat lifted.

But the needle failed to move, hung at 88.

Breathing heavily, the captain waited a few moments, each instant expecting his craft to break clear. Nothing happened. He leaned over, checked the level on the regulating tank glass: correct. The half ton of water had gone overboard, the boat should be slightly buoyant. But still no movement. He scratched his head, glanced again at the depth gage. Perhaps at that extreme depth, the steel hull of the submarine had been squeezed in, no longer displaced her normal volume of water. He had heard of such a thing somewhere before. Well, he would soon compensate for that.

"Obermayer, another half ton overboard!"

Again the pump started to pound, the level dropped once more. On edge now, all hands watched the depth gage, ready to take control; she might rise any second.

But the second half ton of water was discharged and the *U-83* remained immovable; Obermayer, his hand on the switch, looked inquiringly up at his captain.

"Keep pumping," curtly ordered Von Karchen.

But a vague worry rose in his mind, strengthened as the minutes wore on and more water went overboard. The gage needle pointed immovably to 88. Certainly they were buoyant now: over two tons of ballast had been discharged, more than sufficient to compensate for any possible hull compression. But still they did not rise, and in all his experience, never before had a boat failed to lift to even a few pounds positive buoyancy.

The pistons pounded, the water dropped in the glass, disappeared from sight in the bottom. A sense of alarm spread through the room; at their diving stations, the seamen lost their air of alertness, shuffled uneasily, began to worry. Then suddenly the pistons hammered violently, the pump began to race. It had lost suction: the regulating tank was empty! Hurriedly Obermayer opened his switch and stopped the pump.

A cold fear shot through Von Karchen's heart, numbed him for an instant as the meaning of the clattering pump sank in. All that tankful of ballast gone, at least two tons light and they were not rising. Something serious had happened.

Involuntarily his mind ran over the possibilities. Leaks? No, the boat was as tight as a drum; even under that pressure not a single leak had been reported all day long. What else then? He suddenly remembered his prisoners. Had those Americans sabotaged the boat, prevented her from rising? Ridiculous.

He dismissed the idea. At worst they could only have disabled some machinery, but under the circumstances not even idiots would try such a thing. Were they not all in the same boat? Besides, nothing seemed to be out of order. No, that was not it. He racked his muddled brain, tried to figure the cause. And then a vague recollection intruded, assumed a new significance.

Disregarding the frightened eyes of his crew, he stared fixedly at the depth gage. 88 meters. Was that correct, or was the needle stuck? Leaving the periscope station, he strode to port, pushed aside the men at the diving wheels, rapped sharply on the brass case of the depth gage. The needle quivered a little, but settled back on the same mark. So—88 meters was correct. And certainly it had been only 85 meters when first they bottomed.

There was the answer. They had sunk three meters, ten feet, since touching bottom. He felt suddenly weak, sick at the stomach. The *U-83* was half buried in the mud, stuck at the bottom of the sea!

VII

VON KARCHEN looked gloomily at his engineer officer, who, bent double over the drainage manifold, was tightening up the worn packing on the glands of the high pressure pump.

"Never mind, Bruckner, the pump is useless now. We must try something else."

For two hours they had pumped steadily, emptied every pressure tank on the submarine. First the ballast water in the safety tank, then that in the forward and the after trimming tanks had gone overboard, all without effect. Next had gone their supply of drinking water. Still no result, except that the overworked pump had started to leak badly round the piston rods and spray water into the control room. Bruckner, struggling in the cramped space over the pump, had finally stopped the leaks.

But they could pump nothing else. All the variable tanks now were empty, and the boat was still stuck fast in spite of at least twenty tons gone overboard. And the main ballast tanks and the fuel oil tanks, which, if he could empty them, would give him a buoyancy of nearly three hundred tons, he dared not pump.

Those tanks, built between the inner and outer shells of his double hulled boat, would instantly collapse if the pressure inside them failed to balance the sea pressure on the outside of the boat; submerged, they were always open to the sea through the kingston valves in their lowest points to insure that balance of pressure inside and outside.

Only by blowing the contents overboard with compressed air introduced in the tops of the ballast tanks could they be emptied and the necessary balance of pressure still preserved. With a leaden heart Von Karchen looked at the gage on his air banks. Only 400 pounds left in the steel bottles—practically nothing. At 88 meters, against a sea pressure of 130 pounds, the air he had left would probably expand enough to expel the water at most from only one of his six main ballasts. And leave him without any reserve of air.

But the situation was getting desperate. Soon they must rise, or suffocate. Perhaps the pull of even one empty ballast tank added to what buoyancy they already had, would tear them free.

"Obermayer, set valves to blow the middle main ballast."

White faced, trembling, Obermayer fumbled with the air connections to the tank indicated, while the captain himself took charge of the plug valves on the compressed air banks, manipulated the intricate manifold there, bypassed the regulator on the hundred-pound air line ordinarily used, so as to get pressure enough on the tank to be effective.

"Ready, Herr Kapitan."

Von Karchen twisted open the plug valves and the air whistled through the brass line into the ballast tank outboard the control room. The drain was tremendous; the pressure on the banks fell rapidly to 350 pounds, to 300 pounds, while with ashen faces the frightened crew of the *U-83* watched it drop, hoping against hope each instant to feel the boat under their feet tear free and start to rise.

The gage pointer slacked, revolved more slowly. Under the diminishing pressure in the banks, the air was not going through so fast. Slower and slower went the needle as the air supply dwindled; the whistling softened, died away, and the needle came to rest at 130 pounds. Their air banks were balanced with the sea pressure; all the available air was gone; it had not emptied even one ballast tank.

And the *U-83* did not lift.

From all sides Von Karchen saw terrorstricken eyes turn toward him; silent faces scanning his expectantly. Cold fear gripped him, an icy hand seemed to be clutching his heart. He had lightened up the boat as much as was humanly possible; he could do no more. With an effort, he strove to keep his face impassive, masked his dread, faced his men. He was their captain, responsible to the Kaiser for their lives, for the ship entrusted to his care. While he lived, always must he lead, keep up their faith, keep up their courage to the end.

He had lightened up to the limit; that had failed. He knew—every man in the boat knew—that if they had had a full charge of air when they had submerged as the regulations called for, they could now blow all ballasts and assuredly tear free. But his compressors were all worn out, incapable of charging properly; they had left port that way, with their torpedoes charged, with a full charge of air in the banks given them by the mother ship, unable themselves to replenish it. Now that might cost them their lives. And his men knew it. Whose fault would it seem to them—theirs, or his and the Kaiser's? And how would they react if the boat failed to rise? He saw his men gathering in a growing knot round the depth gage, muttering to one another. That must stop, or discipline would soon crack.

"Diving stations!"

The brusk order did not ring true; even to Von Karchen it sounded lacking in that tone of authority which assumed unquestioned obedience. He watched his men, half expected some gesture of protest. But habit was strong. The men scattered, stood by their controls, waited.

VON KARCHEN'S tense nerves relaxed a bit. Relieved for the moment of that fear, his strained mind turned again to the problem in hand. He rapidly canvassed the possibilities, tried to visualize the situation. They had unfortunately bottomed in mud or sand, gradually sunk into it during their long wait for the enemy to leave. Now, in spite of considerable lightening, they could not pull free; evidently suction held them fast. Possibly if he could jar the boat, allow water to work in between their shell and the bed the boat had made for herself in the ocean floor, he could loosen that suction grip, rise free.

It was his last card. He could seesaw the boat with her propellers, rock it free. If that failed . . .

But the current to do it?

It was with ill concealed gloom that he looked at the voltmeters. The power to move the boat lay in the batteries and they were already nearly discharged; hardly enough electricity left to run the main motors even half an hour at slow speed. And the full power, which he desperately needed, would finish them in a minute or two.

The main motors—his last card. The air was gone; they could hardly breathe. If he used up his electricity and failed to rise—no power for the lights, darkness added to their other terrors. And in the darkness, goodby to discipline. Men could stand anything—hunger, thirst, lack of air, and still an iron will could hold them to their duty; but in darkness all the bonds of man-made restraint weakened, faded out. Trapped, dying, the fear of punishment gone, the agony of death magnified in the gloom and the utter silence of the deep sea—what would his men do, what vengeance might they seek on him?

In the light, he could hold them to their duty; together they might all die, bravely, giving their lives for the Fatherland, the end of every good sailor. But in the dark? Imagination would take charge, the fear of death be magnified; discipline would vanish, they would die like beasts, fighting, killing in a frenzy to escape the trap.

Should he risk it? Even with fully charged batteries it was only a slim chance; they were far below the surface, the weight of the sea was pressing them firmly into that cradle in the ooze.

His eyes wandered from the switchboard to the men round the control room. At diving stations they were fingering their controls, watching him for the next order—hopeful eyes glued on their captain, waiting obediently.

Von Karchen looked into their faces, made up his mind. He would chance a mutiny if he failed. He would play his last card, and play it boldly.

Sliding out from behind the periscope, he strode to the after end of the switchboard, motioned aside the petty officer there, seized the two control wheels for the main motors.

"Stand by!" he ordered hoarsely to the man at the diving planes; then, "Full up rudder!"

The diving wheels spun round, stopped at last at "hard rise".

Von Karchen gripped the motor controls, swung them to "full speed ahead".

Instantly the lights in the boat dimmed as the battery voltage dipped under the heavy surge of current. A hum rose aft as the huge driving motors picked up speed. The *U-83* shook as the propellers started to revolve, vibrated from stem to stern as the whirling blades strove to drive her ahead.

A moment only Von Karchen held the controllers steady till the revolution indicators showed the wheels had come up to speed; then he jerked both controllers suddenly to "full speed astern".

Floor plates rattled, the hull quivered under the sharp jerk of reversing screws trying to drag the ship astern. A few seconds the madly revolving propellers were in full reverse, while eager eyes fixed on the bubbles in the trim indicators watched for the slightest sign of movement, or lifting at bow or stern.

Reverse—ahead; reverse—ahead. Von Karchen every few seconds alternated his throbbing screws; pulling, pushing the half buried hull, striving to break it out of its bed. Like a trapped leviathan, the *U-83* floundered in the ooze, diving planes flapping up and down, screws churning up the bottom, sending vast clouds of black mud billowing through the depths, darkening the ocean floor. Myriads of fish feeding on the bottom, startled by the sudden convulsions of the huge monster, fled to quieter feeding grounds.

Teeth clenched in despair as the quivering hull beneath his feet failed to tear free, the straining captain of the U-boat clung to his controllers, fed the current from his rapidly dying batteries to the pulsating motors. No longer would the screws turn up to full speed; with each revolution he could almost feel the power slacking off. Desperately he kept the motors going; he had jolted the boat severely, perhaps allowed the sea to trickle in alongside the quivering hull, partly loosen the suction. The next shock of reversal might finish the job, release them.

But steadily, inexorably, the motors slowed down, the lights grew dimmer and dimmer at each reversal, the jerks on the hull grew more feeble. Von Karchen clung to the controllers. His last hope was fading; his teeth bit deeply into his lips, the veins stood out blue on his forehead, his bloodshot eyes no longer watched the voltmeter. The dull red glow from the darkening bulbs overhead was the best indicator of the state of his exhausted batteries. But convulsively he still swung the controllers.

Ahead—astern; ahead—

The feeble turning of the screws failed now to stir up the bottom. Gradually, like clouds of dust when the wind has died away, the ooze settled back on the ocean floor. The propellers were quiet now; the fins, still set at "hard rise", hung motionless at the stern in a cavern which the churning screws had dug. The upper hull of the *U-83* slowly grew visible again; the fish, no longer scurrying away, again swam round the quiet hull, eagerly nosing in the excavation beneath the motionless bronze screws for food, swimming in and out around the housed periscopes, cautiously eyeing the jagged teeth of the net cutter on the bow.

A round white object in the deck forward of the gun lifted slightly; the fish scattered rapidly. A spherical buoy, tapered to a cone on its under side, rose clear of the wooden gratings, floated rapidly upward, drawing with it a solitary line. In a moment it was gone; the fish returned to feed again in the undisturbed solitude of the depths.

VIII

BIFF WOLTERS peered through the darkness of the after battery compartment into the control room. A solitary light, its filament hardly glowing at all, vaguely illuminated the central operating compartment, made barely visible the abandoned instruments, the useless machinery of the *U-83*. A few sailors, here and there, were sprawled out on the manifolds, their chests heaving spasmodically as they struggled to breathe.

Cautiously Biff squeezed through the watertight door and stepped into the room. At the slight noise as his foot landed on the deck, the captain, who had been slouched down on the chartboard, listlessly raised his head, looked aft, drooped over the board again. The control room had been forbidden territory to him, but now, what difference?

Unsteadily Biff worked his way forward, came abreast the chartboard, touched the captain on the shoulder. Von Karchen twisted round, looked up at him.

"Somethin' I can do to help, Cap'n?" asked Biff in a cracked voice. "I'm an old submarine sailor, myself; been in 'em for years."

Von Karchen gazed at him apathetically. So, a submarine man! Well, he had suspected it all along; in fact had once built his hopes of promotion on that being the case. But promotion was no longer of any moment. The captain shook his head.

"No, I've tried everything. No air, no electricity. We're through."

"I wish to hell you'd left us in that boat then," muttered Biff, half to himself. "Dyin' with a lot o' Heinies for shipmates. Not for me!"

Von Karchen looked up in amazement.

"So? For a common sailor, you are extraordinarily particular how you die. But how will you avoid it?"

"Not much of a trick for an old pigboat sailor, Cap'n. How deep are we?"

"About three hundred feet."

Biff whistled softly.

"Three hundred feet! You sure made a good job of it, I'll say. Well, no reachin' the surface from that depth, but I can get out anyway; that'll make it short an' sweet instead o' chokin' to death inside a German pig. Mind if I try lockin' myself out through the conning tower?"

With new respect Lieutenant Von Karchen stared at his prisoner. The conning tower! It was an escape lock; from a moderate depth a man might hope to reach the surface by closing himself in the conning tower, flooding it with water from the sea till the pressure inside and out balanced so he could trip the upper hatch, and then go shooting upward through the sea with the bubble of air when the hatch flew open. Yes, at moderate depth, forty or fifty feet, it might be done. But at three hundred feet! Even if the pressure did not cause immediate collapse, no one could hope to swim upward through a hundred yards of water. It was plain suicide. He could not allow even a prisoner to do that. Slowly he shook his head.

"No, I can not permit it. Besides, there is still a slight chance."

He patted a telephone receiver clipped over his left ear, which in the semi-darkness had before escaped Biff's eye. Puzzled, Wolters looked at him.

"What's that for?"

"Our emergency buoy has been released; it is floating on the surface now. It has a telephone cased in it, should it be sighted; this is the other end of that telephone cable."

"Blow me if that ain't one gadget that's handy, anyway." Biff fumbled admiringly with the transmitter lying on the chartboard, then a thought struck him. "Say, this is wartime. What'll happen if that buoy's sighted by the limeys instead of your friends?"

"Our worries will cease immediately then, my friend. It will form an excellent marker for dropping depth bombs."

"I wouldn't blame 'em," murmured Biff. "A U-boat all marked out for target practise! They'd be nuts to pass it up. But suppose your friends sight the buoy, what can they do?"

Von Karchen turned wearily back to the chartboard. Biff noted a Luger automatic strapped to his left leg; evidently the captain was prepared for any eventuality. In a lackluster voice he dismissed his prisoner.

"You suppose too much. Turn in like my crew and breath slowly so as not to use so much air. You have no bunk?"

"No," replied Biff. "So far I done all my sleepin' standin' up agin a stanchion."

"Well, make yourself comfortable now; you may stretch out in the passage." Von Karchen pressed the receiver more closely to his ear. "Don't bother me again; get aft and stay there."

"Thanks."

Biff cast a sidelong glance at the lower hatch to the conning tower overhead, gaged the distance to the ladder. Should he make a break for the hatch? If he got into the conning tower, slammed that cover down before they stopped him, the Germans could do nothing. But what was the use? Three hundred feet! When that pressure hit him, he'd pass out right in the conning tower—never even get clear. He shuffled uncertainly aft.

Back in the after battery space, he found Mullaney propped against a locker.

"What's the good word, Biff?" whispered Pete hoarsely.

Wolters slumped down alongside him, stretched himself full length, pillowed his head against a mattress in the lowest tier of bunks.

"The skipper's given up, Pete; he can't raise her. An' what d'ye think he's doin' now? Listening in on a telephone to a marker buoy floatin' on the surface!"

"A marker buoy? What's that? Sure an' we never had nothin' like that on the *L-20.*"

"Naw, but these German pigs carry everything. It's a gadget they can let go from the inside in emergencies; got a telephone in it, a plate with the ship's name on it, an' another plate on it sayin' the finder gets a handsome reward if he notifies the German Admiralty immediately. I s'pose if the limeys find it an' give 'im a ring, the skipper 'll tell 'em to hang up. They got the wrong number!"

IX

THROUGH his binoculars, Commander Thomas Knowlton, skipper of the U.S.S. *L-20,* bound south for Helgoland, curiously examined the distant object bobbing in the waves on his port bow. Probably a mine which had broken from its moorings in the field to the north and which was drifting aimlessly in the North Sea, a menace to all, Allies, enemies, neutrals. He dropped his glasses and turned to the quartermaster.

"Ease off a little to port and bring that mine abeam and about a hundred yards off." Stooping, he shouted down the open hatch at his feet, "Control room, there! Send up a couple of men with rifles!"

Gingerly the *L-20* approached. In the war zone, her skipper was wary of everything; his own experience with mystery submarines had taught him that. Hardly a week ago he had seen the *Galway*, his own decoy ship, entice the unwary *U-38* to her destruction; unfortunately the *Galway* herself had also been sunk in the action. As a result, the *L-20*, left temporarily without a tramp to tow her, had been sent on a raiding tour alone into the North Sea till a new decoy could be fitted out, and now her skipper, just promoted for his success in sinking the *U-38*, approached cautiously, kingston valves open, riding on his vents, ready to make a crash dive should that bit of flotsam show any sign of being a trap.

Carefully he scrutinized it as the *L-20* drew closer; alongside of him, two gunner's mates, rifles at their shoulders, muzzles resting on the mahogany railing of the chariot bridge, awaited the order to fire and blow up the drifting mine.

"Stop both engines!"

The pounding of the Diesels died away; the *L-20* rolled lazily to the seas. Knowlton, close now, stared through his binoculars, started in amazement as he read the legends on the brass plates.

"A U-boat buoy! We've caught something!" He shouted down the voice tube. "Slow ahead starboard, back port." And to the helmsman, "Hard left."

A few minutes later the deck of the *L-20* was lined with excited sailors, staring at the buoy bobbing alongside the conning tower. Was the crew of that U-boat alive or dead? Over went a sailor, splashed in the water, floundered with the watertight cover in the buoy, scrambled back dragging a telephone set. Knowlton, his heart pounding excitedly, slid the receiver over his head and lifted the transmitter . . .

CROUCHED behind the gyro compass pedestal, Lieutenant Von Karchen struggled frantically to reload his pistol before the next rush. At his feet he caught the faint moans of Bruckner, his head laid wide open by a flying wrench in the first wild rush of the crew to overpower their officers and surrender at any price. The deck in front of him was covered with dying men; Von Karchen grunted with satisfaction as the clip slid home in his Luger.

He looked cautiously over the compass bowl at the wild eyes gleaming at him through the semi-darkness. Straining his eyes, he searched the dim forms on the deck. Yes, that was Kranz sprawled out under the wheel; he at least would never lead another mutiny. With his pistol still covering the hesitating mutineers, the captain fumbled over Bruckner's twitching form, found the dying officer's pistol, gasped with relief. Now he was safe, could stand off another attack.

Dizzily he looked around, panting violently for breath. The air was terrible, foul from long rebreathing, poisoned now with powder fumes. A few hours more and they must all perish of suffocation. Good enough. They would all die for the Fatherland. But surrender on the terms offered by the Yankees? Unthinkable! He, an officer in the Kaiser's navy, deliver undamaged to his enemies the signal code book as the price of rescue? Never!

He clenched his teeth in shame to think some of his men had implored him to accept, had mutinied when he refused. Well, that scoundrel Kranz was dead now; he could handle the others. But give up the secret code, jeopardize every ship, every sailor in the Kaiser's navy by placing in the enemy's hands the signal book? His fingers closed more tightly on the butt of his Luger. What was life worth—his, the whole crew's—after such treachery to his shipmates in the High Seas Fleet? Let the depth bombs come! That he would never do! He lifted his pistol a little higher to be free for action, waited.

Uncertainly crouching behind manifolds, periscopes, stiffeners on the bulkheads, the cowed remnant of the crew sought what slight protection the control room machinery offered, waiting for some one to start another rush, overpower the captain by weight of numbers.

For, once faced with the hope of escape when at last came a call on the telephone, wild with ecstasy when they caught the offer of the ship on the surface to send down an air line, blow their ballast tanks, save them from a lingering death, they had forgotten discipline, patriotism, everything save the wild desire for air, the overpowering urge to live. That rescue was conditioned on the surrender of the ship, intact with all her papers and her codes, meant nothing; they were all doomed men, insane with the fear their captor on the surface might change his mind, refuse to take the risk of sending a diver to such a depth, radio for a destroyer with depth bombs to blow them up lest by some miracle, if abandoned by their finder, their U-boat might still break free.

Pleas to surrender had bombarded Von Karchen's ears as he parleyed with Knowlton over the terms of surrender; the pleas had changed to threats as they heard Von Karchen's refusal to turn over the code book, his defiance even of the hint of depth bombs. And then unexpectedly Kranz had precipitated action by hurling at Bruckner, who stood between his captain and the muttering crew, a heavy wrench which had split open his skull.

Leaping clear of his telephone set, Von Karchen slid behind the compass; the reverberations of his automatic rang like thunder through the U-boat; Kranz, the men behind him, crumpled suddenly under a hail of steel.

Slowly now the seconds went by. Tense, motionless, Von Karchen, a pistol in each hand, waited, outwardly calm, terror stricken inside. Alone against his men. In such close quarters, he could not kill the whole crew if they rushed him. He would never get a chance to reload again. But looking at those dark blue muzzles steady over the compass bowl, at the cold light in their captain's unflinching eyes, not one man dared leap first.

Von Karchen raised his head. The situation was better. That Yankee commander on the surface—why should he not be satisfied with the boat as a prize, give up the wild idea of getting her code also? Perhaps he might yet listen to reason. Von Karchen gazed hungrily at the receiver dangling abaft the periscope. It was out of reach. He dared not leave the cover of the compass pedestal, even for an instant take his eyes off his murderous crew long enough to slip on that receiver. A thought struck him. Ah, yes, those prisoners!

X

WHITE faced, Commander Knowlton lowered the transmitter. An unearthly scream ringing in the receivers had burst in on the conversation, then a volley of pistol shots had pounded his ears. And now silence, except for a few moans. Below, no one answered any more. Sudden battle on the ocean floor had ended all discussion of terms.

The roar of fighting died away, but Knowlton, calling repeatedly into the receiver, listened in vain for an answer. He drew back from the low rail of his submarine, stared at the buoy, at the thin cable leading from it into the sea, turned at last, a little shaken by the unseen tragedy below, to the men clustered round him on the *L-20's* deck.

"Well, boys, the Huns down there've started to murder each other; I guess that finishes the surrender question." He looked apprehensively round the horizon. "Let's settle it. Hanging round here isn't safe. We can't wait for any destroyers to help us, another U-boat might come along and blow us up while we're stopped."

A few orders, the crew scattered; the torpedo gang to break out a warhead, the electricians to rig up firing connections to make an improvised mine, remote controlled, out of the warhead and its detonator. Knowlton gazed speculatively at the telephone cable to the buoy; he could slip a shackle round that cable, secure the warhead to it. The cable would guide the charge down, land it right on the deck of the U-boat, where the *L-20,* hauled a little clear, could fire it when ready and blow the *U-83* to bits.

That was the best way after all. Three hundred feet! It was almost suicide to ask any diver to go that deep, ridiculous to attempt it just to save the crew of an enemy sub. For the chance of getting the German naval code, it was worth trying, though success, even with crew inside the boat cooperating, was very doubtful. But now there was no need to worry. The fight in the *U-83* had settled the cooperation problem. One warhead, exploding against the thin shell of the U-boat, would settle her fate, and the *L-20* could add another chevron to those already on her conning tower. One less enemy in the path of Allied success; one less U-boat to ravage defenseless freighters.

After all, it was an act of mercy. He would quickly end the agony of the poor devils down below. He shuddered a little at the recollection of his own ordeal when an incompetent captain had sunk the *L-20* off Helgoland. War was hell.

The torpedo davit creaked. A warhead rose through the sloping torpedo hatch to the deck. Carefully an extemporized electrically fired detonator was slipped in its nose, the heavy charge of TNT slid down the side, shackled by a short line to the mooring cable under the buoy. Gingerly the torpedomen paid out on their lowering line till the warhead had sunk well clear of their own hull, then slacked away roundly.

A voice in the telephone: Knowlton pressed the receiver against his ear.

"Topside, there! The cap'n's got these Heinies down here bulldozed ag'in an' he's ready to talk turkey with you. He says how about forgettin' that code an' lettin' him sur—"

Commander Knowlton's jaw dropped as he listened, his face went white. Biff Wolters' voice coming from the bottom of the sea! Biff, who was dead, drowned in a desperate attempt to release the *L-20* from her sinking decoy ship!

Knowlton burst out:

"For God's sake, Biff, is that you? This is Tom Knowlton and the *L-20!*"

A voice at his elbow:

"All slack on the lowering line, Cap'n. The warhead's resting on that U-boat. Shall we fire?"

Knowlton hardly heard; all his thoughts were concentrated on that receiver.

"Tom? For the love o' Mike! Yeh, this is Biff, an' Pete Mullaney's with me. This German pig captured us after we'd floated a couple o' days, but now we're all damn near choked to death. For God's sake, Tom, do somethin' for us!"

Knowlton's head whirled. Biff and Pete trapped in the *U-83!* Trapped because they had sacrificed themselves to save him, the *L-20's* whole crew, from the horrible end they now faced themselves. For an instant, an impulse to accept the German offer, to save his men at all hazards gripped him—but only for an instant. War was war. If it was humanly possible, he must have that code. The ability to read the enemy signals—who could judge its value to the Grand Fleet in another naval action?

Knowlton pulled himself together. lifted the receiver, in a broken voice answered:

"Biff, old man, you'll have to take it with the enemy. There'll be no help unless we get an unconditional surrender. I've just sunk a mine on your deck; tell the captain of the *U-83* that unless he promises to turn over the signal book intact I'll explode it!"

Silence on the *L-20;* a weird silence as the startled sailors there looked wonderingly at each other. Biff and Pete, their shipmates, not drowned after all, prisoners in the trapped U-boat! Fearfully they eyed the firing cable running over their rounded hull, a sinister thread waiting to deal the death blow to their comrades in the depths.

In agony, Tom Knowlton waited. The seconds seemed like hours till at last:

"Beggin' your pardon for repeatin' it, Tom, but Lieutenant von Karchen says fire an' be damned!" A pause; then, "Say, Tom, Pete says will you remember him to his Maggie back in Quincy? An' do me a favor— Fire quick an' don't prolong the agony!"

Sick at heart, Knowlton turned to the electrician crouching in the lee of the conning tower, shielding the firing key from spray. The *L-20* was too close; they must go astern a bit to avoid danger to themselves. Uncertainly he turned toward the bridge, looked up at the quartermaster, motioned him to back off a little.

Dully he gave the order. His shipmates through thick and thin in the war zone, the saviors of the very ship he commanded—and now he must be their executioner.

They were starting to back. The slack ran out on the lines, a slight tug came on the telephone wire. Knowlton realized with a start that he must cast it overboard as they drifted away. He listened anxiously. Would the German give in? No word. Reluctantly he pulled the receiver off his head, poised it to cast into the sea, hesitated, then impulsively slipped the receiver back on. He could not do it, signal book or no signal book. His shipmates came first!

"Stop! Pick up that buoy again!" He ran forward up the deck to prevent the tautening telephone wire from tearing from his grasp. "Disconnect the firing key!" he shouted to the electrician, then called out to the torpedomen, "Get your diving rig on deck!"

OVER the side of the *L-20* a hose vanished in the water, whipped back and forth as the air whistled down. Inside the quivering submarine, both air compressors throbbed, working to keep up the stream. Knowlton, eyes glued to the surface of the sea, waited feverishly. All the air from his banks was gone, blown into the ballast tanks of the *U-83.* Still she stuck fast, even with every ballast tank in her blown free of water. Now the whole surface of the sea was covered with oil; at Knowlton's direction, the crew of the *U-83* had shifted connections, were blowing their fuel oil overboard in a last desperate effort to tear free.

Knowlton gritted his teeth, looked thankfully forward. There, safe again on deck, was his diver, Chief Torpedoman Evans. Lucky they had finished his long decompression and dragged him back on board before that oil had messed up the ocean. Knowlton looked at him. Evans was pale, bleeding from ears and nose. A wonderful dive, all right, nearly a world's record. Except for the four men who had worked on the *F-4* in Honolulu, three years before, no diver had ever reached such a depth.

But it began to look as if, after all, Evans' heroic efforts in connecting that air hose to the external charging line on the enemy conning tower were destined to be wasted. The *U-83* had little left now in the way even of fuel or lubricating oil that could be blown overboard. If she did not lift when the oil tanks blew dry and started to vent air through the discharge valve, it was all over. As a mercy to the crew of the *U-83,* he would explode his warhead and end their torture.

Anxiously Knowlton watched the stream of oil spreading smoothly over the water, flattening out the waves. The oil slick frothed a little, seemed to whiten, then a mass of bubbles broke the surface. Transfixed, Knowlton leaned far over the rail, staring. Either the oil tanks were all dry and were venting air, or— He held his breath and waited. Then bubbles started to break fore and aft, the sea foamed over a long line. Involuntarily a cry burst from Knowlton's lips.

"She's coming up!"

Geysers of air started to spout, the sea boiled violently. Another instant, the sharp bow of the *U-83* burst from the water at a steep angle, the conning tower tore through the surface. The U-boat hung poised a second with nearly half her length exposed, then the foam covered bow fell back into the ocean with a tremendous splash, see-sawed a few times, leveled off, floating high above her normal waterline.

Awestricken, the crew of the *L-20* watched the dripping apparition bobbing in the sea, a bright red blotch which was their warhead hanging loosely near the torpedo crane.

Knowlton's sharp voice brought them suddenly to.

"Man the gun! They may run for it on the surface!"

The hatch on the *U-83's* bridge flew open, a stream of men swarmed down on deck, hands held high above their heads. Cries rang out across the water:

"Kamerad! Kamerad!"

Commander Knowlton breathed more freely. The Germans were surrendering as their captain had promised; he had the *U-83* herself as a prize—that at least could not get away from him. His eyes ran swiftly over the men on deck. Thank heaven, there were Biff and Pete, waving wildly to him!

With a sigh of relief, he looked again at the bridge of his prize. Here was something would make British eyes pop when he brought it into Scapa Flow, a U-boat intact, with all the secrets of German submarine construction bared to the Allied navies!

A glint of gold lace on the bridge caught Knowlton's eye. The captain of the U-boat, last to emerge, was leaning over the rail. He looked across at his captor, then hurled something overboard. It hit with a splash close alongside the *U-83,* vanished in the oily water. The signal book in its lead filled covers was on its way to the bottom.

With hardly a pang Knowlton watched it sink, then turned to the quartermaster.

"Ahead slow, and lay alongside."

The rudder went over, the *L-20* nosed her way slowly toward her prize. Knowlton pondered: how could he scratch up a crew to take her into port? He had no extra men; besides, the captured vessel was practically helpless—no air, no electricity in her batteries, probably little oil left for her Diesels. Lucky Scapa Flow was only a few hundred miles away. He would put aboard his new assistant, Ensign Harmon, give him six men as a prize crew, leave a dozen of the German engineers aboard to help, pump a few tons of oil into her tanks if need be, and finally convoy her himself to Scotland. Yes, that was the best bet; he could not afford to proceed to—

The quartermaster grabbed his arm; a sharp cry broke in on his reverie.

"Cap'n, the U-boat's sinking!"

Knowlton leaped to the rail. The *U-83,* her hatches wide open, was going awash. Startled, Knowlton turned to her bridge. It was deserted, the German captain had gone below. As the thunderstruck skipper of the *L-20* watched, the hull of his prize sank deeper and deeper, disappeared, while the men on her deck leaped overboard, started to flounder through the oily seas toward the *L-20.* Another moment and the conning tower vanished; a few blasts of air spouted up as the seas, washing down the open hatches, flooded the compartments; then the oily water smoothed out once more. The *U-83* was gone.

Almost inarticulate with rage, Commander Knowlton watched her go, helpless to prevent it; but the sight of the swimmers feebly struggling in the sea brought him sharply to.

"On deck there, get lines overboard for those men quick! Don't lose any of 'em! Especially that captain!"

But there was no need. Already a dozen of his own crew had jumped overboard, were helping the exhausted men in the water to the lifebelts which went hurtling from the *L-20* into the oily seas.

XI

"SURE, Tom, an' it's thankful we are to see you ag'in. The saints be praised!" Pete crossed himself fervently. "Biff an' me thought we was as good as dead long ago."

Silently Tom Knowlton clasped the wet hands of his rescued shipmates, watched as the last of the oil smeared, wobegone German prisoners was assisted through the hatch into the battery room below, then scanned the sea again to make sure the man he wanted was not still adrift. No doubt about it, the German captain was missing.

"It's just as well for him that skipper didn't get clear and come up," said Knowlton grimly. "A court-martial would damn quick have had him lined up against a wall and shot for sinking a prize of war after he'd surrendered it!"

Biff shifted a little uneasily, looked guiltily at Pete, said hesitantly:

"Well, I dunno, Cap'n. I wouldn't think too hard o' him for what he did. You see, he never surrendered nothin'!"

"He never surrendered?" Knowlton stared at his dripping torpedoman in amazement. "He certainly did!"

"Naw, he never did. I just took a chance an' surrendered for him. When you telephoned ag'in after threatenin' to blow us up, an' says it's all right, never mind the code book—just surrender the boat, that Heinie's conscience started to bother him somethin' awful about turnin' over even the boat, an' he says to me, 'Tell 'em I surrender nothin'. We will all die for the Fatherland!' an' he waves them pistols in my face.

"Well, I says to myself, 'That's all right for you, but I don't owe the Fatherland nothin'. I'm damned if I'm gonna die for it!' So instead I reports that everything's O.K; we surrenders, go ahead an' raise the boat."

"And you mean to say the German let you get away with that?" asked Knowlton incredulously.

"What could he do?" Biff's wan face lighted reminiscently. "He just crouched behind that compass all the time we was workin' the valves, ravin' mad an' orderin' us to lay off or he'd shoot. But we had 'im there; he didn't have bullets enough to shoot us all, an' we promised him that if he shot anybody, those of us as was left would get him when he got through shootin'. Then we'd see that the signal book as well as the boat was turned over. That put him in a hell of a hole for fair. For the sake o' that signal book he let us alone till she come up."

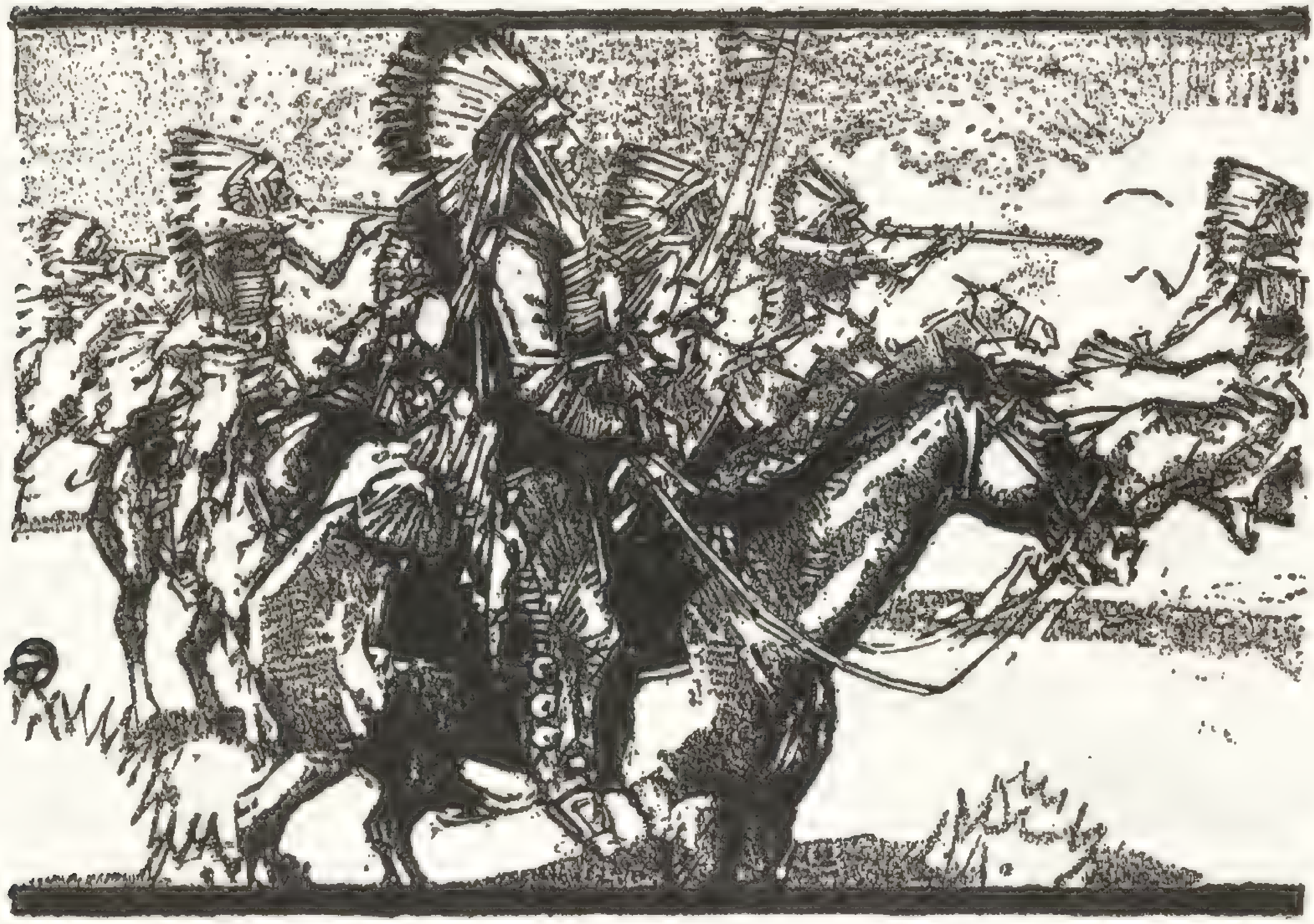
"Yes, an' even then he waited till all hands had got up on deck before he opened the vents an' sunk her ag'in," put in Pete.

Biff wiped the oil from his face and nodded slowly.

"An' seein' as he ain't never surrendered nothin', what he did was all right with me. He wasn't such a bad skipper, that Heinie. I guess all hands oughta be satisfied, Tom."

"Maybe you're right, Biff," muttered Knowlton. "And I shouldn't wonder but that goes for Lieutenant von Karchen, too."

The Second of Three Articles on the



By STANLEY VESTAL

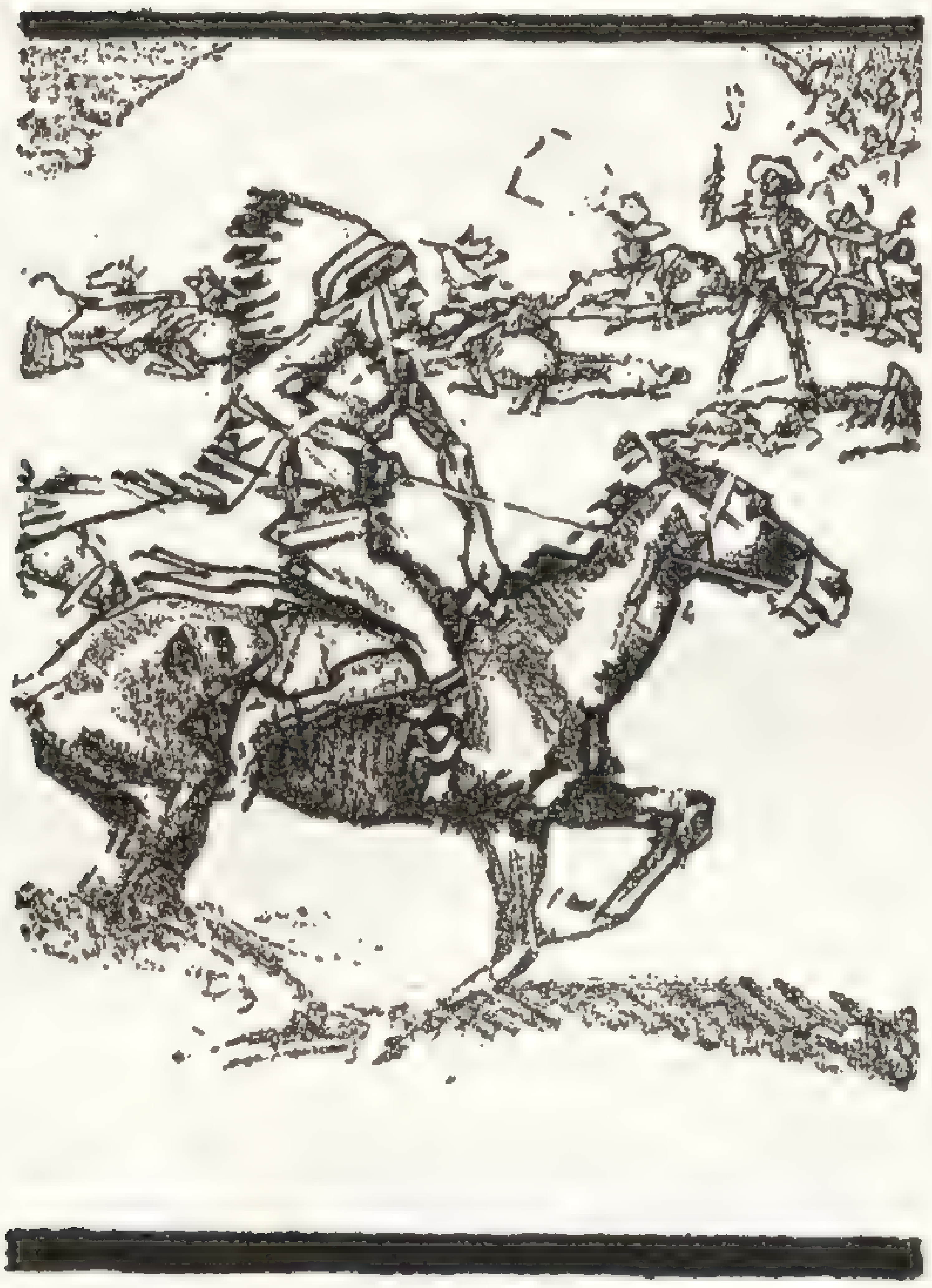
AFTER the Red Cloud War of the sixties, Sitting Bull and his fellow Sioux kept the peace with white men, until General George A. (Long Hair) Custer led his troops into the Black Hills on reconnaissance in the Summer of 1874. This invasion of lands held sacred by the hunting Sioux, and guaranteed to them by treaty with the United States, was an unfriendly act.

But when Custer found gold in the Hills, and the miners swarmed in to settle there, so much trouble followed that the United States Government ordered all Sioux to come in and settle at their agencies before January 31, 1876. The weather was so bad, the camps so far distant, and the agencies were so unable to feed Indians who did come in, that Sitting Bull and his Indians failed to obey.

It was then discovered that the weather was too severe to send troops after him. But in March '76, Reynolds attacked the village of Crazy Horse and Two Moon. Reynolds burned the Indian tents, but had to retreat, and was court-martialed for failing to make good his advantage. After that Sitting Bull saw that the soldiers were determined to attack his people, and summoned them from all the agencies to his big camp on the Rosebud. There Sitting Bull was elected to lead the Sioux, and Two Moon to lead the Cheyennes.

The Winter before, Sitting Bull, Iron Hoof, One Bull and a woman had gone on a raid against some Red River breeds near the Canadian boundary and, while in danger of death, Sitting Bull had vowed to make the Sun Dance, if his

Champion of the Sioux



SITTING BULL *and* CUSTER'S LAST STAND

life were spared. On June 14, on the Rosebud River, a few miles below the present town of Lame Deer, Montana, Sitting Bull fulfilled his vow. It was at this Sun Dance that he made his famous prophecy that Custer would come and be destroyed.

Scores of old men now living heard the prophecy (Sioux, Cheyenne, Arapaho). Ten days later Custer himself passed through the deserted Indian camp, on his way to its fulfilment. Black Moon directed the dance. All the first day Sitting Bull danced—and that night—gazing up at the sun during the daytime. By noon of the second day, the crowd noticed that he seemed faint and hardly able to stand. Black Moon and others took Sitting Bull and laid him down, threw water over him, brought him to. His eyes cleared and he spoke to Black Moon in a low voice. He had had a vision: his sacrifice was accepted, his prayer was heard.

Black Moon walked out into the middle of the Sun Dance lodge and called aloud:

"Sitting Bull wishes to announce that he just heard a voice from above saying, 'I give you these because they have no ears (will not listen to reason).' Sitting Bull looked up and saw soldiers and some Indian scouts on horseback coming down like grasshoppers, with their heads down, and their hats falling off. They were falling right into our camp."

Then the people rejoiced. They knew what that meant. Those white men, who would not listen, who made war without cause, were coming. And because they were coming upside down the Indians knew that the soldiers would be killed at the camp.

When Sitting Bull had recovered from

his faintness, he warned the people. Said he:

"Those soldiers who are coming are the gifts of God. Kill them, but do not touch their guns or horses. Do not take the spoils. For if you set your hearts on the goods of white men, it will prove a curse to this nation."

When Custer reached that Sun Dance camp, ten days later, his Ree scouts saw signs left behind that made them tell him—

"The Sioux are sure of winning."

On June 17, three days after the Sun Dance, General George (Three Stars) Crook was defeated on the Rosebud by the allied tribes, and went back where he came from. But as none of his soldiers was killed inside the Indian camp, the people were still waiting for Sitting Bull's prophecy to come true. It came true on June 25, after they had moved over to the Little Big Horn (the Greasy Grass).

That morning the day broke clear, hot and sultry—almost windless. It had been very dry for some time, and the trails were deep in dust.

At dawn, One Bull, Sitting Bull's nephew, and Gray Eagle, the chief's brother-in-law, turned loose the family stock, which had been picketed close by the lodges all night. Then they mounted and drove the animals to water at the river nearby. They had to pick and choose carefully to find a watering place, because the banks of the Greasy Grass were steep and soft and at least four feet high.

There they sat, their bare legs dangling, while the ponies thrust their noses deep into that cold water rushing over its pebbled bed. The stream was only about twenty yards wide, and not deep enough to swim a horse in most places.

When the ponies would drink no more, and began to splash and squeal and nip each other, the two young men drove them out upon the grassy benches west of camp. They had to go some distance, for the multitudes of mules and horses in that great camp had already, in two days' time, grazed off all the prairie close at hand. When the ponies had settled down to feeding, the young men returned to camp and had breakfast. Later they returned to have another look at their herd, for their horses were their most precious possessions.

Sitting Bull had only twenty head (war horses, racers, buffalo runners, pack mules, mares and colts), but they were choice animals. The Cheyennes often had more than the Sioux. Two Moon, for example, then had twice as many as Sitting Bull. There were too many calls on Sitting Bull's well known generosity to permit him to grow rich, and by custom a chief could not demand a return when he made a present.

One Bull and Gray Eagle found it hot on the prairie. Pretty soon they came home again. It was not yet time for the midday watering.

Sitting Bull was then in the council teepee of the Hunkpapa Sioux camp, talking.

He was then wearing his ordinary clothes: a fringed, smoke tanned buckskin shirt embroidered with green porcupine quills, tassels of human hair, and long, decorated shoulder straps reaching across his chest almost to his belt. Leggings and moccasins to match, red breech clout, and a single eagle feather upright at the back of his head. His long braids, wrapped in sleek otter fur, hung down his chest.

Framed by those picturesque braids, his broad face with its firm jaw, piercing eyes, and the humorous twist at the left corner of his thin lipped mouth, was painted red for luck, as was usual among men resting in camp.

At his belt he carried his knife—a curved butcher knife with a brown wooden hilt—which rested in a black leather sheath studded with three rows of brass tacks. At the moment One Bull got back, Sitting Bull was gently waving a buffalo tail mounted on a short stick—a fly brush—for the flies were a terrible plague on the Greasy Grass that Summer.

IT WAS a lazy day and, after the fight with Crook, the Indians were resting. In spite of warnings, few of the people expected enemies. Some of the young men were fishing, and the hills east of the river were covered with women digging tipsin.

Just then Fat Bear rushed up to the council tent. Brown Back had brought the news, he said. That morning, very early, two Hunkpapa boys were out looking for stray horses. They crossed a soldier trail, and in it found a lost pack. Curious to see what it contained, they broke it open. It was full of hard bread. Hungry, as boys will be, they sat down and began to eat. While they were eating, some soldiers came back on the trail, saw them and began to shoot. They killed one of the boys—Deeds—but Hona's brother made his getaway. The white men had fired the first shot!

Sitting Bull sprang up and, throwing aside the door flap of the council tent, limped fast as he could toward his own tent, not far off. That tent was nearest of all to the coming soldiers. While he hurried along, there came a yell of alarm.

A man was pointing, yelling, and every one turned to look in the direction he pointed—south, upriver. There, in the bottoms, they saw a tower of dust coming, and under it the blue shirts of soldiers, the heads of horses. While they stared, the column of soldiers widened into a line, smoke bloomed from its front, and they heard the crackle of the carbines. Sitting Bull plunged into his tent to get his arms. He had a revolver, caliber .45, and an 1873 model carbine Winchester—a .44 center-fire, with one band. Both weapons were gifts from his nephew, White Bull.

In the tent Sitting Bull found his other nephew, One Bull, arrived on the same errand. One Bull had a muzzle loading single shot tradegun, and he knew it was worse than useless in hand-to-hand fighting. He caught up his stone headed war club, and offered the gun to his uncle. Already the bullets were whining overhead, and one of the ten poles was splintered above them. One Bull was just twenty-three.

"Uncle," he said, "I am going to fight."

"Good," said Sitting Bull. "Go ahead. Fear nothing. Go straight in."

Taking his own round shield from its buckskin case, he flung the carrying strap over One Bull's head, so that it would protect his chest. Together they ran out of the lodge, Sitting Bull busily buckling on his cartridge belt. Already some one had caught up his war horse—the famous black with white face and stockings, given by his brother-in-law, Makes Room. Sitting Bull jumped upon its bare back.

All around him was confusion. Old men were yelling advice, young men dashing away to catch their horses, women and children rushing off, afoot and horseback, to the north end of the three-mile camp, flying from the soldiers.

They left their tents standing, grabbed their babies, called the older children and hurried away—frightened girls shrinking under their shawls, matrons puffing for breath, hobbling old women, wrinkled and peering, with their canes, making off as best they could; crying children, lost children, dogs getting in everybody's way and being kicked for their pains, nervous horses resisting the tug of rein or lariat, and over all the sound of the shooting. Sitting Bull's first action was to see that his old mother was safely mounted, and on her way. She went with the women; the men stood fast.

Four Horns was there, old as he was, on a mixed roan-and-bay horse, armed with a bow and arrows. No new fangled firearms for that old-timer! And now the chief's nephew, White Bull, out with his horses north of the Sans Arc Sioux camp, had seen the soldiers coming, jumped on his war horse and, carrying his Winchester, came dashing down to Uncle Sitting Bull's camp. Every man able to fight was ready and mounted by that time, and White Bull could hear Sitting Bull's resonant bellow:

"Brave up, boys. Brave up. It will be a hard time."

The Hunkpapa stood their ground bravely, covering the flight of their women and children down the flat. Major Reno's troopers soon felt that resistance, and Indian veterans of that fight say it was sure hard luck for the major that he happened to strike the Hunkpapa camp first.

White-Hair-on-Face remembers that day well. He had had to run and catch his pony. Now he came galloping back to join the fighting. He could see Sitting Bull out in front of all the warriors, shouting encouragement. Everybody was yelling and giving orders; nobody was listening. White-Hair-on-Face met his mother-in-law running to safety. She was dragging one child by the hand. He gave her his horse. She put the little boy behind her, the big girl in front, and away they all went—three of them on one horse!

Fast as the Sioux were mounted, they rode out to meet the soldiers on the flat. Those who had guns fired occasionally, falling back slowly, trying to cover the retreat of the women streaming to the north. Every moment reenforcements came up, until there were enough Indians to stop the soldiers in their tracks. While this was going on, the Sioux on the right flank swept down on Reno's Ree scouts, recaptured the pony herd they had taken and sent the Rees flying. Some of those Rees were so scared of Sitting Bull's "boys" that they did not stop running for two days. The famous Sioux, Circling Hawk, was in this part of the fight.

And now the soldiers stopped sure enough, got off their horses and began to shoot and fight on foot. The Sioux took courage; their women and children were safe. They charged the soldiers from the north and west, and the troops began to give way and drop back into the timber—it was thick in those days—along the river. Pretty soon they were getting behind a cut-bank among the trees, where the riverbed used to be long before; they were facing southwest. The Sioux were all around them.

Bobtail-Bull had come out of his tent when the fight began. Some one shot at him and he dodged back. But he was soon outside again, had caught his pony and was out in front with his gun like the other men. He was brave that day. Says he—

"The very first person I saw there was Sitting Bull, yelling encouragement."

Gall was there too. In his report of this fight, he says—

"Sitting Bull and I were at the point of Major Reno's attack."

Sitting Bull was puzzled by Reno's behavior. The major had come against that huge camp with his handful, and then, instead of charging—the only method by which he could hope to fight his way through—he had dismounted his men and was fighting them afoot. Sitting Bull thought Reno was acting like a fool. But Sitting Bull had a head on his shoulders; he was much too intelligent to underestimate his enemy. He wondered what was up. Therefore, he remained with his warriors north of the troops, between them and the camp.

"Look out!" he yelled. "There may be some trick about this."

Meanwhile his nephew, One Bull, was over on the west side of the soldiers with other young men. As nephew of the chief, carrying the chief's shield, One Bull considered himself in command of that bunch. As the troops fell back toward the timber, and the cut-bank, these young men charged them, horseback. One Bull, young Kansu, Swift Bear (Crow King's brother), young Black Moon, and a lad named White Bull (not Sitting Bull's nephew) led that charge. The troops on the flanks ran for the trees, but the middle troop held its ground for awhile and kept shooting hard. Then it fell back too. The young men charged, swung past the white men's line and turned back to their own comrades. They lay close to the necks of their ponies to avoid being hit. But it was no use.

Good Bear Boy was shot from his horse, then Black Moon went down, and right away White Bull was killed. One Bull saw Good Bear Boy fall, and called to Looking Elk to save him. Looking Elk paid no attention; maybe he did not hear. Good Bear Boy was not dead; he was trying to crawl back to his friends. One Bull turned back, got off his horse, helped his friend up across the animal, and mounted behind him. The wounded man was bleeding freely, and very soon the whole front of One Bull's clothes was covered with blood. Good Bear Boy was shot through the thighs, both legs, the left being broken.

WHEN One Bull had reached what he thought a place of safety, he dismounted and got ready to help his friend down. As he did so, the horse turned broadside to the soldiers and was shot in the hind leg. One Bull led the horse to the rear, keeping in front of it. He was in a bad place, right between the Indians and the soldiers. He kept in front of the horse because he thought the soldiers had more ammunition than the Sioux. As soon as he had placed Good Bear Boy in the hands of friends, he hurried back to the battle.

By that time the soldiers in the timber had untied their horses from the trees and were galloping up the west bank of the river hard as they could go, all strung out, looking for a place to cross. The moment Sitting Bull saw them running like that, without order, every man for himself, he knew that Reno's attack on the village had not been inspired by unusual daring. He knew the answer to his puzzle then: the soldiers had been *waiting* for somebody to come and help them. That was why they fought on foot, and took cover in the trees. Right away Sitting Bull surmised that another war party of the enemy was somewhere near. After that he did not urge the young men to rush the soldiers.

They needed no urging. They were all over those fleeing troopers, killing them with war clubs and the butts of their guns, shooting arrows into them, riding them down.

"We killed the soldiers easy; it was just like running buffalo. One blow killed them," say the old men. "Many were shot in the back; they offered no resistance."

Away they went, plunging through the river, and scrambled up the steep, sprawling ridges of that high bluff, to find a breathing space on top. Thirty of them lay dead, and a few had been left behind in the timber. It was an utter rout, due largely to bad leadership. Major Reno had never fought Indians before.

The Indians followed the troopers right to the riverbank. Sitting Bull could not stop them.

In this part of the fighting Dog-with-Horns was killed and Chased-by-Owls mortally wounded. The Indians chased the soldiers right up to the bank of the river, and some of them rode over.

"In this fight there was no leader; all were brave," say the old men. "There was no need to give orders; everybody knew what to do: Stop the soldiers, save the ponies, protect the women and children." And so every man did what he thought best. Everybody shouted directions and encouragement, few paid any attention. No one was in command. "I was not standing still looking on; I was shooting," is what the old men say.

There must have been a thousand warriors against Reno. Benteen, who saw them chasing Reno, estimated nine hundred.

Just then One Bull and others reached the bank of the river. Some of the warriors had crossed and the last of the soldiers were scrambling up the steep bluffs. Last of all went four horse holders who had been left behind. One Bull and his comrades, hot with victory, started to plunge into the stream, to ford it and kill these. But Sitting Bull objected.

"Let them go," he yelled. "Let them

go! Let them live to tell the truth about this battle!"

He wanted all white men to know that this fight had been begun by the soldiers, not by the Sioux. They came shooting, fired the first shot. Sitting Bull was sick and tired of being blamed for the sins of others. Everything that went wrong in Sioux country was laid at his door.

One Bull obeyed; he turned back. And then his uncle saw that he was all covered with blood. It was the blood of Good Bear Boy, but Sitting Bull did not know that. He said:

"Nephew, you are wounded. You had better go back and have some one attend to your wounds."

One Bull laughed and explained that he was unhurt. Then Sitting Bull, with that anxiety lifted from his mind, at once reverted to the suspicion raised in his mind by Reno's strange behavior. Said he—

"Then you had better go back and help protect the women and children."

Those women had run a long way north by that time; they must be stopped, rounded up and guarded. They might need protection. Sitting Bull rode north through the abandoned camp.

As he approached the end of the brush near the prairie dog town, he came upon the negro, Teat Isaiah. Two Bull, Shoots Walking and several others rode up at the same time. Isaiah was badly wounded, but able to talk. He spoke Sioux and was well liked by the Indians. He had joined the troops because, he said, he wished to see that Western country once more before he died. And now, when he saw his old friends the Sioux all around him, he pleaded with them.

"My friends, you have already killed me; don't count *coup* on me." Isaiah had been shot early in the fight.

Sitting Bull arrived just then, recognized Teat and said—

"Don't kill that man, he is a friend of mine."

The negro asked for water, and Sitting Bull took his cup of polished black buffalo horn, got some water, and gave him to drink. Immediately after, Isaiah died. The warriors rode away. Afterward, some spiteful woman found the negro's body and mutilated it with her butcher knife.

Sitting Bull rode north through the abandoned camps, one after the other. The tents stood empty and forlorn, their gaping doors open to the hungry, prowling dogs which sneaked in looking for meat, hardly able to believe that their good luck was real, and running off guiltily when they heard the hoof beats of the black war horse. Here and there lay a dead pony where some stray bullet had found it. Sitting Bull hastened on to the north and west, up the flat. He could see a crowd of women and children gathered there, boys and old men trying to keep them together. By this time they had learned that Reno's soldiers had been routed downriver, and were streaming back to their tents again.

But just then another war party of enemies was seen on the bluffs across the river to the east—Custer's five companies trotting along the ridge, looking for a place to cross the stream. Sitting Bull's hunch was justified, there *was* a second war party!

Instantly, the women who had started back to their tents ran out on the prairie again. They gathered together on the flat opposite Custer, somewhat to the southwest, perhaps half a mile from the river. Sitting Bull and other men tried to hold them there. There were plenty of men to do this: though every able bodied man who could get there had opposed Reno, not half of them joined the attack against Custer.

Meanwhile One Bull was dashing downriver on the east bank with other young men to meet this new danger. They had just killed many soldiers, they felt sure they could kill many more. Away they went, whipping each other's horses, riding like mad.

But suddenly One Bull remembered the orders of his uncle, Sitting Bull. He reined up, splashed his pony through the stream to the west bank and galloped northward to the horde of women on the flat, not far from the Cheyenne camp circle. They had stopped running now. Sitting Bull was there, with a number of other warriors. He sat on his black war horse, his quirt dangling, looking on at the battle across the river.

The white soldiers were trotting along the hilltop in a cloud of dust, making for the ford. Four lone Cheyennes rode out to face them—only four at first. But these four (Bobtail-Horse was one; he still lives) seemed to daunt them. At any rate, the soldiers stopped. Shooting began. The smoke rolled down the hill in a dense cloud. Indians were all around, more and more of them. What with the dust and the smoke there was not much to see.

One Bull was eager to join the fighting. He urged his uncle to go with him. But Sitting Bull replied:

"No. Stay here and help protect the women. Perhaps there is another war party coming. There are plenty of Indians yonder to take care of those."

By "those" he meant, of course, Custer's immediate command. Once Sitting Bull's suspicions were aroused, they did not readily sleep again. Having been greatly puzzled by Reno's strange behavior, he was even more puzzled by Custer's. Why had he halted just when he should have charged? There was no answer—unless he was waiting for some one. Once more Sitting Bull's hunch was right: if Benteen had not been balked by the Badlands, he would have struck the village from the west side as Custer had planned.

Such skill in forecasting the enemy's movements, such canny sizing up of a situation, was what made Sitting Bull the peerless leader of the Prairie Sioux. Brave men were plenty in their camps. But a man who combined courage, intelligence and skill, as Sitting Bull did, was hardly to be found. He knew, as Napoleon knew and said, that "battles are won by the power of the mind."

SITTING BULL was too seasoned a warrior to get excited when there was no need. He saw what would happen. Across the river, up on the tumbled ridges, under that haze of smoke and dust, it was happening very swiftly. Cheyennes and Sioux were making quick work of Custer's tired troopers. For awhile it was all shooting, and then, as the Indians captured horses and found pistols and ammunition in the saddle bags, the firing increased in volume. Then some of the soldiers were killed, or retreated, and the Indians obtained carbines and cartridge belts, advanced up the coulees and ravines, and the firing got hotter and hotter.

Sitting Bull's nephew, White Bull, over yonder, side by side with Crazy Horse, Iron Lightning, Owns Horn, and others, were counting *coups*, jerking soldiers off their horses, taking their guns, their mounts. It was hand-to-hand fighting by that time.

One soldier was afoot, pointed his gun at White Bull. But White Bull rode him down, counted *coup*, taking his arms. Another soldier on foot tried to bluff White Bull, aiming his carbine at him. But when White Bull rushed the man, he threw his gun at the Indian without shooting. They caught hold of each other and wrestled together there in the twilight of the dust and smoke.

The soldier was brave and strong. He tried to wrest White Bull's gun from him, and almost succeeded. But White Bull hit his enemy across the face with his quirt, made him let go. Then the soldier grabbed White Bull's gun with both hands, until White Bull struck him again. But the soldier was desperate; he struck White Bull on the jaw and shoulders, seized him by the long hair with both hands, held him, drew him close, tried to bite his nose off.

White Bull thought his time had come. He was dizzy from the blows, but yelled as loud as he could to frighten the soldier. At last he freed himself, hit the white man several times on the head with his pistol butt, knocked him over, took his gun and cartridge belt.

That was a close shave, yet Sitting Bull's nephew did not stop fighting. He counted seven *coups* up there, snatching one "first" from under the very nose of his pal, Crazy Horse, who carried a Winchester that day. The famous Oglala chieftain was not wasting time shouting orders in that mêlée; he was busy counting *coups* and killing all the time. That was what Crazy Horse meant when he painted his face with white spots and let his hair hang loose—just killing!

On another part of the field a strange thing happened that day. In those times, white men were in the habit of addressing all Indian men familiarly as "John" and their wives as "Mary". One of the Sioux was fighting hand-to-hand with a soldier, and the soldier was at his mercy. As the man saw the knife above his breast, and knew that he was doomed, he called out in a hoarse, sobbing voice, "Oh, John! Oh, John!" Thereafter, the Sioux who killed him took the name. Says he:

"There are plenty of men called John nowadays. But I was christened on the battlefield. I wish you to remember that *my* name John is not like other Johns. It is different."

All this time the Sioux and Cheyennes did not know what soldiers they were fighting. It was only after the battle was over that a mixed blood, who could read numerals, told them they had been killing the Seventh Cavalry. After that they began to pillage the dead. They cut the waistbands of the soldiers, cut off their boots, and scalped and mutilated some of the bodies. In spite of Sitting Bull's warning, they took almost everything. Like most soldiers, they were keen on souvenirs.

One of the Indians, Bad Juice, who had seen something of the Seventh Cavalry around Fort Abraham Lincoln, knew that Long Hair Custer was their chief. As he and White Bull walked about the battlefield, he pointed out the naked body of the white soldier chief. White Bull had never seen Custer before, nor had the other Hunkpapa, except across the sights of a rifle. Certainly Sitting Bull never had seen Custer.

A lot of false romance has been printed about this—some of it by people who ought to know better. It is absolutely certain that Sitting Bull never met Custer in his life. Indeed, it was not until some time after the battle that he learned who had led the soldiers against his camp. We have his own statement for this, and all his old Hunkpapa friends and relatives now living say the same. This yarn is one of the many legends which have grown up about the mystery of Custer's death. As the old-timers put it, "There are too many tongues."

The story goes that the Indians all knew Custer—just how is not explained—and that they failed to scalp or mutilate him because they respected him so. This yarn shows a complete ignorance of Sioux customs. For it was precisely the bravest enemy who was most likely to be cut to pieces—if only because he had made so much trouble.

Very brave men were sometimes chopped into mince-meat for spite, or fear they might come alive again. The only man mentioned by the Indians as braver than the rest that day is Sergeant Butler, who ran out to one side and stood off the Indians single handed for a long time. That man, with the three stripes on his sleeve, they say was the bravest of all. And all died bravely.

Moreover, the dead soldiers were so grimy and dusty that their own friends could hardly identify the bodies, and Custer had had his hair cut. And seeing that he was the man who had opened the Black Hills to settlement, he was the very last officer to be admired or respected by the Sioux. He was the man who, as Swift Bear put it to the Commission, made "that thieves' road". Besides, Custer *was* stripped, and not half the bodies of his men were mutilated or scalped. It was only down near the Hunkpapa camp, where the women returned after Reno was routed, that the enemy bodies were all mutilated.

Many stories are current about Custer's horse, too. One day, not long after the fight, White Bull drove his ponies to water. At the river he saw a fine sorrel in the bunch of Sounds-the-Ground-as-He-Walks, a Santee Sioux, and a son of Chief Inkapaduta. White Bull asked if it was a good horse. The Santee answered—

"I know it is a good horse, for it used to be Long Hair's."

When the fighting was over, Sitting Bull rode across the ford and asked—

"Are they all dead?"

Some one answered—

"Yes."

Sitting Bull said—

"Let's go back to camp."

The heat and the flies were so bad that day that the dead horses and men at the south end of the camp were already becoming offensive, and the Hunkpapa broke camp and moved downriver. Some of the Indians went over on the grassy benches west of the bottoms and rigged up temporary shelters there. The wounded had to be cared for, and the dead laid away. As soon as this work was well begun and the camp was once more full of warriors, Sitting Bull galloped off to have a shot at the soldiers entrenched with Reno on top of the bluff.

He found that the soldiers had dug rifle pits and put their horses and mules in the middle. Earlier in the day some of the mules had run down the bluff and the young men had caught them, finding ammunition in the packs. But Two Moon says that they could not catch all these runaways, as the mules would get scared when they smelled the Indians and run back up again.

When Sitting Bull arrived, the Indians were assembled on the south and to the northeast of the whites. The chiefs had ordered the young men to leave a lane open on the east side, in case the soldiers wished to leave the country.

White Bull, Sitting Bull's famous nephew, was with the Indians to the northeast—quite a way from the soldiers and on higher ground. Sitting Bull was with those on the south, a good deal nearer. There was some charging back and forth that day, and Sitting Bull charged with his men. Two soldiers got separated from the others, and Sitting Bull's bunch killed those. Shell-Ear-Ring and Snake Creek ran out to them and counted *coup*.

In the bunch with White Bull there was a man named Dog's Backbone. He kept warning his comrades:

"Look out, now! Those soldiers are a good way off, but their bullets are coming over mighty fierce."

Just as he said this a ball hit him in the forehead and he dropped dead.

ALL that evening the Indians kept up a hot fire on the soldiers, and official reports show that they did not shoot in vain. Reno lost eighteen killed and forty-six wounded. The young men kept on shooting until it got dark, and even then they hung around all night, and Reno's scouts were afraid to try to get through. Toward evening Sitting Bull returned to the camp.

The soldiers on the bluff imagined they heard scalp dances going on down in the bottoms, and by all accounts they were in a very anxious and excited condition. There were no scalp dances that night; old Sioux and Cheyennes are indignant at such an indecent suggestion. Too many Sioux warriors had fallen, there were too many mourners in the camps; that was no time for rejoicing.

It was never the custom of the Sioux to hold a scalp dance under such circumstances, until after four days had elapsed and the mourners had given permission. The first victory or scalp dance was held near the Big Horn Mountains, four days later. Sitting Bull mourned with the others. Said he:

"My heart is full of sorrow that so many were killed on each side, but when they compel us to fight, we must fight."

And he commanded, "Tonight we shall mourn for our dead, and for those brave men lying up yonder on the hillside." So it was done.

The racket those frightened soldiers heard that night was the wailing of the mourners, the shouting and hallooing of thousands of people collecting their possessions and moving camp in the dark, the songs of sadness, and all that noisy grief to which the Indian mourner abandoned himself. Added to this was the hullabaloo made by some agency Indians, who got drunk on the whisky found in the dead soldiers' canteens; they fired wanton volleys at the stars.

And Sitting Bull was sorry because so many of the people had taken the spoils of battle. In spite of his warning, they had taken everything—horses, guns, clothing. His own immediate band took nothing, but the others could not be restrained; no man could have controlled them in the excitement of that victory. A stubborn and stiff necked generation. Sitting Bull said:

"Because you have taken these things, henceforth you will covet the white man's goods. You will be at his mercy; the soldiers will destroy you."

Few of Sitting Bull's band have any souvenirs of that battle. But One Bull, his nephew, afterward married a woman of another band, and she brought into his home a saddle bag taken from the soldiers. For nearly fifty years it has been used as a valise in her family, and has been repaired with sinew. Now it is in my possession.

They had to make haste with the burials that evening. Flies were so fierce that even during the little time they were fighting with Long Hair, many of the dead of Reno's command in the bottoms were already fly-blown.

Next morning, as soon as it was light, the Indians gathered around Reno on the bluff in great force and began pouring a terrific fire upon the entrenchment. They could see that the soldiers' horses were no longer saddled, but the troopers had dug such deep rifle pits that the men were out of sight. Sitting Bull was with the others up there. His young men were delighted with the guns and ammunition they had captured. Many of them had never owned a breech loader, or handled fixed ammunition. The shiny cartridges pleased them. Altogether, they had taken the carbines and pistols of more than two hundred dead soldiers and scouts, and perhaps fifty rounds for each gun from the saddle bags and cartridge belts.

Custer's men carried one hundred rounds each into the fight. Reno's men appear to have used up half their ammunition in the bottoms before they ran for the bluffs, since they begged Benteen's men to supply them when he arrived soon after. Of course Custer's men had only what they carried in their belts, after their horses stampeded with the saddle bags. It has been estimated that the Indians captured close upon ten thousand rounds, all told; some of this was used up in the fight with Custer, some in celebrating the victory and shooting into the dead after the fight; but they still had plenty left to make it hot for Reno. He, of course, had all the twenty-four thousand rounds brought in by the pack train.

About the middle of the morning, some of the Indians rushed the trenches from the south, up that steep slope, right across the open. It was almost as steep as a house roof, and there was not a shred of cover. Yet Long Robe reached the trench, struck a soldier with his *coup* stick, and started back. Right there they shot him. He was a brave man; one of Lieutenant Gibson's men shot him. There is a marker on the battlefield to show where he fell.

Reno's soldiers were in a tight place. All authorities, both Indian and white, who were present, agree that if the Indians had charged all at once from all sides, a retreat must have followed, and a second retreat under Reno must have become a rout. There was no place to go; every soldier would have been rubbed out. Many have wondered why the Indians let these soldiers go, and some have thought that the Indians pulled out because they were frightened away by the approach of the Infantry under Generals Terry and Gibbon.

But that is nonsense. The Indians had plenty of time to kill all of Reno's men before the Infantry arrived, and then they could have run away on their fleet ponies. Long before noon the women were striking the tents. The Infantry could not catch them; and when it did arrive, it did not try to. That story won't hold water.

The truth has never been told about this. It was Sitting Bull who saved Reno.

About noon he came to the Sioux line again. He told the young men to cease firing.

"That's enough," he yelled. "Let them go. Let them live; they are trying to live. They came against us, and we have killed a few. If we kill them all, they will send a bigger army against us."

Sitting Bull sent Knife King to carry this order all along the Indian lines. While Knife King was shouting Sitting Bull's commands, a soldier suddenly rose up, fired, and shot Knife King through the body. However, Knife King survived; his son is living now.

The young men were tired, thirsty, hungry. They were glad to go. White Bull had already gone back to camp and was taking a nap after his night's work. When the women took the teepee down, he woke up, and with two other young men went north to meet the coming soldiers and raid their horse herd. They were successful; they brought back seven head of horses. When they came home they found the camp gone, but followed the trail and caught up with their people near the Big Horn Mountains. There was held the first victory dance.

The Custer battle was over. No captives had been taken, there was no torture. A whole library of fantastic romance has been woven about this disaster to American arms. But the only men who *know* what happened that day are the Cheyenne and Sioux survivors, and they are not telling it to strangers. Their testimony is abundant, and in agreement, as far as the stories of eye witnesses can be. All details given here can be proved by the statements of from two to twenty reputable eye witnesses. It is only lately that they have dared to tell the truth. Heretofore, for the most part, Indians who talked at all said what their agents told them to say. If they did not, the official interpreter usually arranged matters for them.

AND so journalists made wild surmises and palmed them off on the public for facts. They elaborated some Indian's chance remark into a chapter, though that remark may have been half comprehended, or wholly misunderstood. Many of these legends were—very naturally—to the discredit of Sitting Bull, Custer's arch-enemy. If they had not been, there would have been no market for them during the Sioux campaigns. But it is time these hoary lies were forgotten.

Thus, they said Sitting Bull was making medicine during the battle, "skulking in the hills." Those defamers could not foresee that scientists would develop a science of ethnology and explode their lie; perhaps they themselves did not know that there was no way of making medicine for the success of a battle.

They said that Sitting Bull ran away from the fight, that Gall was in command, and so on for pages and pages. They said that he was so frightened that, when he ran, he forgot to take one of his boys along, and so the child was ever after known as The-One-Who-Was-Left. All this is sheer poppycock. The boy's name—a common one amoung the Sioux—means Left-on-the-Battlefield. It was given him by Four Horns, Sitting Bull's uncle, in commemoration of the time when he himself had been left for dead during a fight with the Crows—an event so famous that it was used to mark the year 1843 in the Hunkpapa Picture Calendar, or Winter Count.

Even if Sitting Bull had run away from the fight (as he could not, being lame), even if it had been the custom to name children for events in their own lives (as it was not), can any sane man believe that Sitting Bull would have named his own son in memory of his own cowardice? This is all of a piece with the rest of the scandals and libels which came in so handy when it was the policy of the Indian Ring and the Indian Bureau to browbeat and defame the only first rate man among the Sioux who dared stand up to a system rotten with graft and injustice.

Any man who knows the old time Sioux knows that if a man does one disgraceful deed, he is thereafter dropped like a hot brick. A coward could no more have gone on leading the warlike Sioux and Cheyennes than a man who cheated at cards could be prime minister of England. It is a sheer impossibility.

The popular legend of Sitting Bull is about as much like the real thing as that highly colored lithograph of Custer's Last Stand which used to hang in the good old days on the wall of every barroom in the United States. Gaudy, but highly inaccurate.

As for Gall and Crazy Horse, reputed generals of the Indian forces, they were undoubtedly brave soldiers, first class fighting men, none better. But neither of them was equipped to plan a campaign or lead a nation. When they saw an enemy, they charged; that was the whole of their strategy. They were mere cavalry captains. The Indians knew this, and they made Two Moon chief of the Cheyenne detachment, not Crazy Horse; Sitting Bull was elected chief of the Sioux, not Gall. Such authority as there was, was vested in these two men. Gall was a man of action merely. Old Hunkpapa (Gall was a Hunkpapa) are startled into laughter when they learn that the books say Gall was in command of them at the Battle of the Little Big Horn. Not one in five of the men who took part in that fight even knew that he was on the ground.

Of course he was there, bold as a lion. Of course he led some charges, led his own group. But so did many others. And in a defensive fight like that, there could be no commander, no director of operations. There was no discipline, no pay chest, no guardhouse.

How could an Indian chief wage war by plan? He could not, and he did not. Many have praised Crazy Horse as a great general, equal to Stonewall Jackson, but these gentlemen are entirely silent as to the plan of his battles. If he had been as good as they say, how does it happen that West Point does not study his campaigns, the plans of his battles? Our efficient military experts have not thought it worth their while, and they are right. There is nothing to study.

There was no trap laid, no strategy. Gall and those Hunkpapa with him, being at the south end of the field when Custer came, naturally rode up the coulee which leads northeast toward the place where Custer fell. Two Moon and Crazy Horse, anxious to defend the northern camps, naturally took the nearest way to do so, and rushed up to meet Custer at that end. Nothing could have saved Custer from such a battle hungry horde—after he halted. If Gall and Crazy Horse were the generals of the fight, they were stupid generals, or they would have captured the pack train, and taken the twenty thousand rounds of ammunition—a rich booty for the Indians.

It is ridiculous to explain the actions of Indians or frontiersmen (who used Indian methods) by the science of warfare as taught at West Point. It required no more science to destroy Custer than it did to destroy Braddock. It took courage, men of iron; the camp of Sitting Bull was full of them. Benteen knew the answer, for he saw as much of that disaster as any white man. His explanation was:

"Too many Indians! Good shots, good horsemen, the best fighters the sun ever shone on!"

Gall gets credit for being leader when Custer fell because he was chosen (for very good official reasons) to escort a party of officers over the field on the tenth anniversary of the battle, June 25, 1886. He told the story of his part in that fight quite honestly; told just what he saw and did. The officers who listened were apparently ignorant of the fact that it was bad form for a warrior to discuss another warrior's feats, and so they went away with the impression that Gall led all the charges that were made, that Gall was the leader, the general and the hero. It was all a misconception. Had any other leading man of the Sioux been asked to tell his story, as Gall was, it is a safe bet that today the history books would enshrine his name as the hero of the Little Big Horn.

There is no reason to belittle Gall to make a case for Sitting Bull; if Sitting Bull had been a hundred miles away hunting antelope that day, he would still have been considered the bravest and greatest of the Sioux. The disaster to Custer was a big event to military men; it was only an incident in the career of Sitting Bull. He was in many harder fights than that.

There remains only the question of how many were killed on either side, and how many—if any—of the whites escaped.

How many Indians were killed in the fighting with Reno and Custer? Estimates vary, but nobody has yet taken the trouble to list the names of the Indian dead, and so settle the matter. Now, for the first time, we have the names. For Chief White Bull, Sitting Bull's nephew, who has long kept books —in the Sioux language—of the casualties of Indian forces in the fights in which he took part, gives the following list of Sioux who were killed. Those who may think the list too brief, can investigate for themselves and add the names of any who may have been inadvertently omitted. Only Sioux dead are listed.

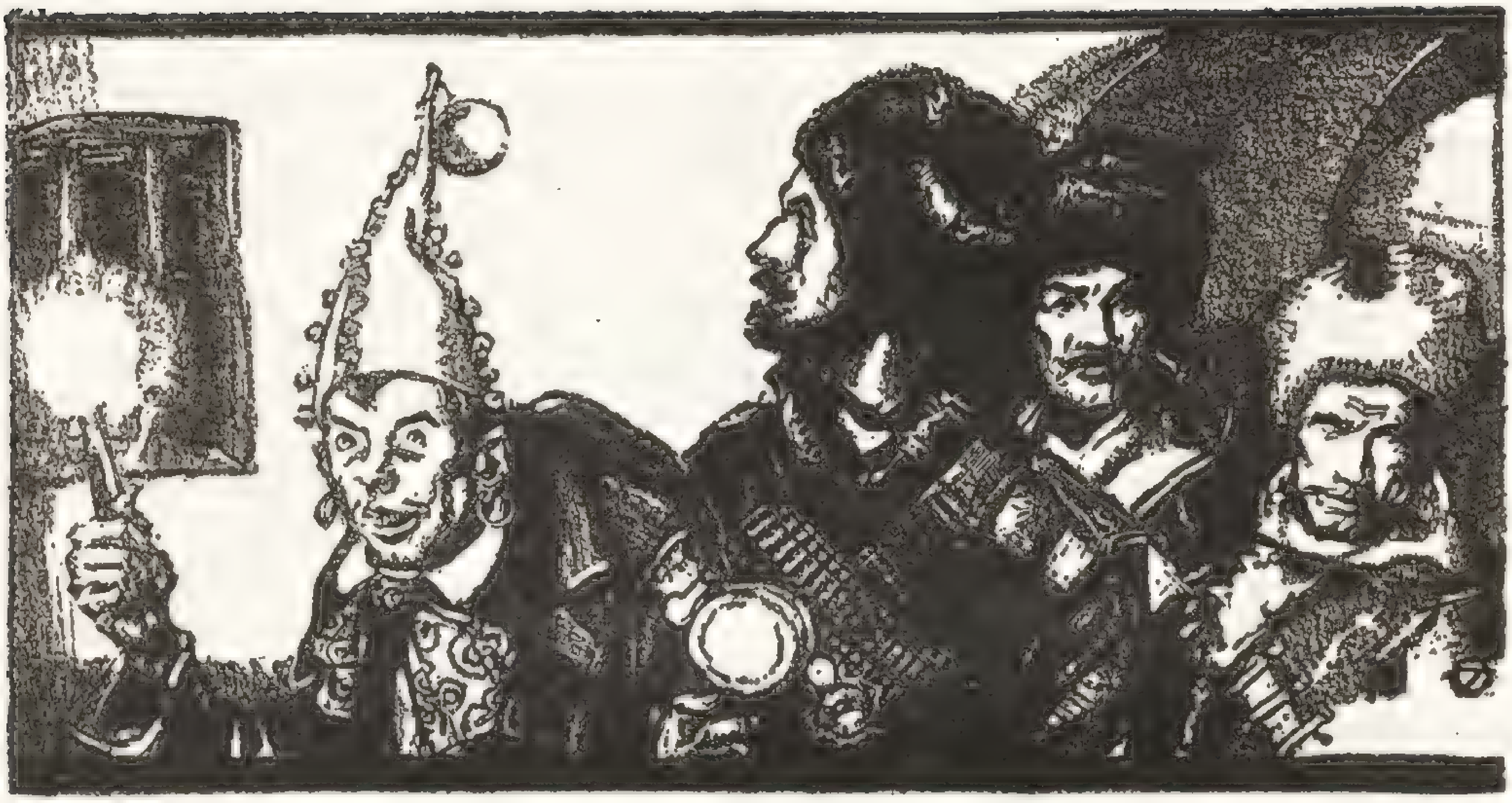
Deeds, Dog-with-Horns, Three Bears, Chased-by-Owls, White Eagle, Swift Bear, White Bull, Standing Elk, Bear-with-Horn, Lone Dog, Elk Bear, Cloud Man, Hawk Man, Kill Him, Guts, Plenty Lice, Red Face, Bad-Light-Hair, Young Skunk, Dog's Backbone, Left-Handed-Ice, Owns-Red-Horse, Young Bear, Flying By, Mustache, Black Fox, Swift Cloud, Long Robe, Young Black Moon: twenty-nine in all.

Not all of Custer's men died on the field; some escaped. As is well known, some bodies were missing when the relief column arrived. It was long supposed that the missing men were buried in the quicksands of the river. But perhaps that is not the whole story.

Willis Rowland tells how, some years after the fight, he and another Cheyenne found the bones of a man fifteen miles east of the battlefield, lying hidden in some brush. No buttons or other traces of clothing were with these bones. Rowland concluded that these were the bones of some soldier, who, after being knocked cold, stripped, and left for dead, recovered, wandered away, and died of exposure or from the wounds he had received. Such a fate may have been shared by others whose bodies were never found; but, of course, a naked, wounded man, without food or shoes, in that climate could never hope to survive long. A few miles of plodding, a few hours of despair, and it was all over.

Perhaps the last hours of such a man might have been sweetened, had he known that the wiping out of Custer's command was to bring the full force of the United States Army against Sitting Bull, drive him to Canada and ultimately force his surrender and hound him to his death.

The third and last article on Sitting Bull will appear in the next issue.



The JESTER of MOSCOW KREMLIN

By NATALIE B SOKOLOFF

THE young officer, Nikita Rasumov, crouched on the cushions of the window seat in the miniature tower which topped his Moscow house and peered through the leaded casement into the night.

The street as yet was empty. Somewhere, far away, the night watchman began to beat out the hour on his wooden board, the blows resounding hollowly through the stillness of the night. Rasumov listened to them, counting them slowly, as slowly they reached him, one after another, ominously. It was midnight! He held his breath, pressing his face close to the leaded pane.

He was in absolute darkness. He never dared to bring a light into the tower, dispensing with it even when mounting the circular stairway leading to it; an unnecessary precaution, for there were no windows on the stairs and the light thus could by no chance be glimpsed from the outside. But the young officer, like many others at the time who lived in perpetual fear of their true political preferences being discovered any moment, took no chances. He knew that, should his nightly vigil come to the knowledge of his enemies, the fact alone would seal his doom.

He mopped his forehead and again pressed his face to the pane. There was not a single light to be seen in all the houses around. Concealed by dense growth, only their towers showed, and then rarely—only when an occasional moonbeam would strike, silver and blue, against their leaded casements. Yet he knew that in many of them the man, or men, of the house sat wide awake and at this very moment engaged in the innocent—to the uninitiated—occupation of peering through the windows.

He knew also that, as soon as the men for whose appearance he and his fellow workers were waiting so breathlessly would emerge out of the night, to stamp unconcernedly along the creaking sidewalk, to halt here and there at some unfortunate's gate, then stamp on and vanish in the darkness; the watchers then would steal down the stairs and out into the street to take a look at their gates. On them they would read their fate—with a light or heavy heart.

"Midnight," thought Rasumov. "They will be coming soon."

He licked his parched lips. There was no sign of them as yet. The street, the gardens, remained still and shrouded in darkness. Only here and there, and far away, straight before him, the young officer caught the reddish gleam of lights as if suspended in midair against the background of cloudy night skies. These were the lights in the turrets and bastions along the high Kremlin walls. The guard there had been doubled, tripled, and lately even further strengthened in number, ten men to the former one, by the order of the mistress of the Kremlin, the mistress of the whole of Russia, the wise and beautiful Princess Sophia, regent and sister of the sixteen year old Czar Peter.

Suddenly out of the blackness at the end of the street there appeared the red glow of lanterns, swinging in the hands of several men who stamped loudly along the opposite sidewalk. The men walked briskly. There were sounds of other, invisible, feet along his side of the street too, and to these Rasumov listened, holding his breath. Would they stop at his gate?

He saw the man walking ahead of the rest stop at the gate facing his. The man raised the lantern high, stretched his arm, moved his hand over the boards; then, lowering the lantern, walked on. Rasumov knew what both the halt and motion meant. The man had inscribed a large cross in red crayon on the gate. This red cross was a warning. The man of the house now could make his choice. Either disappear instantly and thus relinquish the struggle of his cause; or, trusting in God and his lucky star, remain.

Few, however, risked the latter choice. It meant imprisonment, torture, and in the end, certain death. Would he have to make the choice tonight? Rasumov wondered. The heavy step was coming nearer. Still nearer. He trembled. No; they passed.

He waited awhile, then peered out. The street was empty. He crept down the stairs into the garden, opened the gate and peeped out. He saw the unfortunate master of the house opposite slip out into the street, throw a hurried look at his gate, and as noiselessly steal back. The hinges creaked loudly.

Rasumov opened his gate and, stepping forward, surveyed it quickly. No, there was no red cross on it. He reentered the house, his heart light with relief, and went into the kitchen where his soldier-servant Danilla was snoring blissfully on the stove.

"Danilla," the young officer called him gayly. "Danilla!" He shook him by the shoulder. "Aren't you ashamed to sleep like this when I've been through I don't know what the last hour? Get up!" he cried, laughing as the man blinked at him sleepily. "Let's have a drink."

"A celebration, is it?" Danilla asked, his coarse face expanding in a good humored grin. "So there's no red cross on our gates?"

"No, thank God! We are free men for another day, at least."

Together they brought out kegs of cider from the closet and, seating themselves on the bench side by side, drank heartily to the event.

"What Czar Peter's—" Danilla wiped his mouth on the sleeve of his green regimental kaftan— "thinking of, I don't know. What's he waiting for? There won't be any of us left by the time he makes up his mind to march against this witch, Princess Sophia. Regent, she calls herself! Why did she then send Peter off to Ismaylovska village, then Semenovska, then Preobrashenska? Every time farther and farther away from Moscow. And hasn't it been proved that she has tried to kill him, four times at least, since he was nine years old? God bless him and keep him!" He crossed himself. "And now he is in Troitsky Monastery, a hundred miles from Moscow. What did he go there for? She didn't send him there, did she, the witch?"

"No," Rasumov explained. "The Czar went there of his own accord. He repaired to the Troitsky Monastery for the purpose of prayer, or such was his official reason. The regiments of Poteshney are flocking to the Monastery from Moscow for the same reason, officially again. And Sophia of course knows of the Poteshneys' move—and how she wishes she could halt them! But she can't. Poteshney are Peter's regiments and Peter as Czar has perfect right to have his own troops. She knows that. Were she to stop the Poteshneys from going to Peter, it would be the signal for a general uprising against her supremacy. Princess Sophia's troops, the Streletzs, are ready to give their lives for her as long as she remains regent. They have not guessed as yet, as you and I, Danilla, that she herself aspires to the throne."

"I knew it the first time I saw those black eyebrows of hers," remarked Danilla grimly.

"Yes, I don't like her eyebrows, either," Rasumov agreed. "Well, and so the Czar is getting ready in Troitsky Monastery and Princess Sophia is gathering her forces in Moscow. Perhaps Sophia, after all, will decide to be satisfied with her rôle of regent. If so, the Czar will stay quietly in one of the villages assigned to him and wait until he is twenty-one, when he will enter Moscow as Czar. Should Sophia, however, reveal by some slip her secret plans, why, then he will fight it out with her."

"It's a pity the Czar didn't call us to him, to the monastery, as he did the Poteshneys."

"But we are not Poteshneys. We are Streletzs, Danilla. We are supposed to be serving Sophia."

"And we would, if she didn't plan to steal the throne from Peter, our rightful Czar," said Danilla, pouring himself another mug of cider.

"I hope she doesn't find out that we are in the Czar's service for some time yet," remarked Rasumov drolly.

"Well, if she does, we'll know it by the red cross on our gates," returned Danilla with a yawn.

"I'm going to bed now," said Rasumov. "I must be at the palace at nine tomorrow morning. The princess' court day."

"Since when are *voevodas* invited to court?" demanded Danilla. He regarded his commander pityingly.

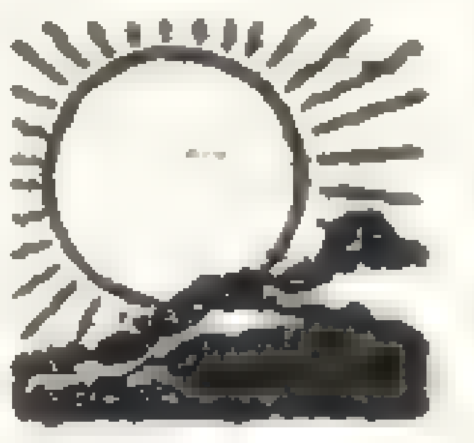
"What can I do? But don't worry, Danilla. Perhaps instead of pleasing her I will only displease her."

"I don't know what's more dangerous," the other returned grimly.

"And he is right," thought Rasumov, as he laid himself down to sleep.

He frowned as he thought of the Czar, of the impending war, of the princess regent's smile. Then, as other thoughts, of quite a different and tenderer nature, drifted through his mind, he sighed happily.

"I will see her tomorrow at the palace," he thought. But it was not of the princess regent he was thinking . . .



THE sun was shining brightly, as early next morning Rasumov passed through the gloomy gates in the Kremlin Wall and entered the Red Square, resplendent with its veritable forest of gilded cupolas and crosses, sparkling in the summer sunshine. They struck one as very brilliant in contrast with the gray stone and discolored wood of the churches they topped and of the massive palaces which crowded about the four sides of the cobbled square.

The young officer crossed the square, making toward the gates in the opposite wall, which opened into the Kremlin proper. The gates stood wide open, with the guard of Streletzs drawn up on either side, tall and motionless, while several of their comrades were busy keeping at bay the crowds of the curious, who pressed forward, anxious to catch a glimpse of the splendor of the yard beyond, and perhaps even of the beautiful princess regent herself.

At the sight of Rasumov, who wore the green kaftan and round green hat fringed with fur—the uniform of the Streletzs—and a short sword at his silk sash, by which he was at once recognized as a *voevoda,* or chief officer of Streletzs, the crowds gave way before him. The guard presented arms. Rasumov walked into the palace yard.

It was full of soldiers, officers and boyars, the latter talking among themselves in low voices, preliminary to mounting the broad flight of steps to be ushered with pomp into the presence of the Princess Sophia. Rasumov saluted his brother officers, bowed to the boyars and, escorted by two guards who carried silver hatchets in their hands, the sign of their office, went up the steps and was announced loudly in the Stone Chamber.

It was a large and gloomy apartment, with brown and black tones predominating, but lighted up brilliantly in patches where the slanting rays of the sun fell through the small windows set with iron bars. On a raised dais at the end of the chamber, in a high backed, carved chair, sat the Princess Sophia, like some legendary goddess, erect, smiling, her white hands with the sharp nails on the arms of her chair.

The sun, falling upon her, brought into sharp relief her long lithe figure in its close fitting bodice of green silk; the stiff folds of the voluminous sarafan of red damask with its hem of fur, from below which peeped the toe of her tiny red shoe; the white full sleeves of her blouse through which one glimpsed the warm flesh of her arms. The tall headdress she wore blazed with precious stones. Pearls shone on her neck, forehead and wrists. The transparent folds of her *fata* fell like a cloud from the sides of the headdress, framing her face.

Somewhat dark she was, with enormous black eyes, coal-black eyebrows that met on the bridge of the straight sensitive nose. Her mouth was large, red and always smiling, disclosing teeth as perfect as her pearls. Even when in a rage, which the princess regent often was, the smile would still be there; only those black brows, coarse as a man's, would be drawn together in a frown, at the sight of which the bravest of Streletzs shook in his boots.

Rasumov approached the dais, bowed to the floor. At a word from the princess, spoken in a soft, languid voice, he rose and, though he had come with the firm resolve not to look at her, his eyes met hers smiling upon him. He hastened to efface himself in the crowd of guests who stood about the dais. But, when he peeped out cautiously from behind the shoulder of a fat boyarin who stood in front of him, he again caught her gaze fixed on him with that tantalizing expression peculiar to the princess regent.

He dropped his eyes. Some one spoke to her and she answered. Then he heard her laugh. He knew that he was in great danger. She would come to hate him soon, as the man who had declined to answer her smile. She had seen him at a review a few days ago and had at once singled him out by calling him to her side and speaking to him. And then came the order to attend the court day, which explained his presence at the social function where *voevodas* were never invited.

He saw now that it was indeed a purely social affair. Conversation was polite and rather dull—of painting, poetry, music, which it appeared flourished at the moment both at home and abroad. Only men were present. Women in those days were not permitted to attend anything unless as hostesses in their own homes. And the men were not interested in art, as Rasumov saw by the way talk languished gradually. More important affairs claimed their thoughts. They looked bored. And this was not lost on the princess regent.

With the tip of her toe she kicked to action the ugly dwarf, her jester, who had fallen asleep at her feet on the steps of the dais. The jester blinked his eyes, jumped up hurriedly to make a few awkward leaps which, owing to his huge hump and general deformity of his small figure, aroused no little merriment among the guests. He was about three feet in height, but his face was larger than that of any ordinary man. Deadly pale it was, with a long hooked nose, a mouth which stretched from ear to ear, bad crooked teeth and tiny eyes. He was dressed in the gay costume of his profession. Breeches, one leg green, the other yellow. Long stockings, one red, the other purple. And red shoes, with long curling toes.

The close fitting jacket accentuated the enormous hump, and was black and white. It was trimmed with numerous ruffles. He wore a tall, conical green hat, from below which his ugly ears stood out sharply. In his hand he held his rattle. He was shaking it all the time. He was always on the move. Leaped and jumped and somersaulted, skipped and danced. And his face was never still. Grimace followed grimace. He grinned, screwed his eyes, opened his mouth wide . . . It was an art. And all the while the rattle rattled, and the numerous little bells with which his clothes and hat were hung, tinkled incessantly.

Rasumov watched his antics unsmilingly. His mood had no place for laughter. Others also seemed to share his state of mind. There hung about the brilliant assemblage an atmosphere like that before a storm. Tense it was. Ominous. Every one was thinking of Sophia. Of Peter. War was inevitable. Their hearts were heavy with anticipation.

The princess regent alone laughed heartily. Suddenly she caught one of the boyars yawning. Her eyebrows drew sharply in a frown.

"We are bored, I see," she remarked coldly. "Crack," she called to the jester, "you are not funny. Try something else."

The jester tried, but unsuccessfully. Rasumov saw his large face twitch with fear.

The princess regent clapped her hands.

"Take him," she said calmly to the guard who ran up to her. She pointed at the jester. "Flog him," she added softly. "Flog him until he neither speaks nor breathes. I have no need of him. He is a bad artist."

The poor dwarf threw himself at her feet, imploring forgiveness. With her toe she kicked him in the face. The guard began to drag him away.

Rasumov suddenly stepped forward.

"Your Highness!" Flushed with indignation, he tried to smile as her eyes turned upon him. "Your Highness, forgive your jester. It is not that he is a bad artist. But—" he threw all caution to the wind— "in your Highness' presence, who can take notice of a jester? Your Highness—"

The princess blushed with pleasure.

"You have a heart then," she remarked lightly. "I would never have suspected it. Very well, Crack is forgiven. Kiss the *voevoda's* hand, fool. You owe him your life. On your knees, idiot!"

But Rasumov laid a firm hand on the dwarf's shoulder.

"No, don't kneel, poor friend. It must hurt your back."

He tilted the dwarf's face back a bit to look into it with a friendly smile. Tears were streaming down the ugly cheeks and whether it was from pain the princess' pretty foot had caused, or from the unmistakable kindness of the young man's voice, that he cried, Rasumov never knew. They were the first kind words the dwarf had ever heard from a fellow man. For the first time, some one recognized him as a human being. He gulped, wiped his eyes with his fist and, snatching and kissing Rasumov's hand, shuffled off to the dais, where he laid himself again on the steps at the feet of his beautiful mistress.

The incident served as fortunate diversion. Conversation flowed. Unobserved, Rasumov slipped through a side door into the gloomy corridor.

TWO long robed figures appeared at the other end, drawing toward him. Two women, their faces concealed by their white *fatas.* One was old, with a stoop to her shoulders. The other a young girl apparently, with eyes shining through the flimsy folds of her headdress.

As they passed, Rasumov bowed. His hand felt the light touch of warm young fingers. When he looked up, the women had disappeared. But he knew the meaning of that touch. He was to wait here for the young girl, his betrothed Ludmilla, the niece of her companion, the old boyarina Golitzina, who was a close friend of the Princess Sophia. The old boyarina came daily to the palace to talk with the regent, which permitted the young girl to slip undetected into the corridor for a few words with her childhood friend, young Rasumov.

He therefore waited patiently, and finally she returned. She ran to him and they clasped hands. She threw back her *fata,* disclosing a rosy, laughing countenance.

And suddenly the door of the Stone Chamber opened slowly. The princess regent's beautiful head appeared.

"*Voevoda,*" she called softly.

She had evidently seen Rasumov's stealthy exit and mistook it for an invitation to her to follow him.

Seeing the pair, she frowned. She flung the door open and stood on the threshold like a goddess of rage. The frightened face of the jester peeped from behind her arm.

She never said a word, however. She smiled, turned her back upon them and reentered the Stone Chamber, banging the door after her.

"Oh, my poor Nikita," whispered the young girl. "How angry she is."

"Go, go!" said Rasumov. He was very pale.

The girl swiftly vanished into a doorway nearby.

"Is that your lady love, Commander?" some one asked in a whisper.

It was the jester, looking up into his face with the eyes of a devoted dog.

"Yes, Crack. She is my promised wife," said Rasumov, taking the jester's hand. In his predicament he was glad he had a friend in the ugly dwarf. "But, now—Oh, Crack! I don't know what will happen to her. You are always here, in the palace. Look after her. And if anything—"

"Be assured, I will see no harm befalls her. I know what I shall do. I will tell her everything I overhear said by the princess or those about her. Your lady lives with the old boyarina Golitzina? It's not far from the palace. But I must go. The princess won't have me out of her sight for a moment even. Goodby."

Rasumov walked home like one in a dream. He recounted everything to his servant Danilla, and together they made plans for Rasumov's escape. For he knew that he was a marked man. He was not the first man singled out by the princess regent to show his unwillingness. He knew what awaited him.

"I'll saddle your horse," offered Danilla, "and you ride to Troitsky Monastery. Stay with the Czar. And when this thing blows over—"

"It never will," said Rasumov. "Moreover, I can't leave Moscow. I must be here to take command of those of Streletzs who have vowed to help the Czar should he come to take Kremlin. No, I can't."

"Then you'd better say your prayers," advised Danilla unemotionally.

Danilla was willing, as he had often stated, to fight anything—the devil himself if need be. But Fate? Never! Therefore he was something of a fanatic; consequently phlegmatic in character.

"They will certainly kill you," he said. "I won't be surprised if we see the red cross on our gates tonight."

They passed the day sitting there gloomily. Dusk fell. It grew dark. A lonely first star peeped into their casement. But it was still long to midnight.

Suddenly they heard a stealthy noise in the garden. A soft step nearing. Danilla jumped to grasp his musket, which stood in the corner. Rasumov drew out his sword. Then the door began to open slowly. It opened. A dark figure of a diminutive nun stood on the threshold.

"A woman," said Danilla contemptuously, and he put his musket back in the corner.

The nun drew back her black veils a trifle.

"Ludmilla!" cried Rasumov. "Ludmilla," he repeated, as he closed the door and drew a stool to the table for his visitor. "How could you? Alone, unattended. What if some one should recognize you? They'd put you in the convent for the rest of your life."

"I had to come," explained the girl quickly. "These—" she touched her dark robes— "belong to a nun who lives with us. She is away just now. I took her clothes. I had to come . . . Oh, I am so frightened, Nikita. The princess' jester came to me but an hour ago. He could not go to you himself, so he told me. They, the princess and her boyars, they are going to kill the Czar!"

"Who? How? When?" the two men cried simultaneously.

"I don't know. The jester didn't know. All he heard was that the Czar will be killed. They said something about a secret messenger sent, or to be sent, to the Troitsky Monastery."

"Danilla, get my horse! Have you the route to the monastery? Give me the list of stations on the way. If I change horses every twenty miles, I'll be there by sunset tomorrow. And—" he added, as Danilla ran out— "Ludmilla, you go now. Thank you. How I wish I could take you with me away from court, from the princess. But—"

"Your duty lies here in Moscow, Nikita," the girl interrupted him gravely. "Don't think that because I am young and a woman, I don't understand. I know there are many Streletzs who are against the princess. You are one of them—and I am glad," she added. "Goodby. I will be brave and wait for you."

She drew the veils over her face and went out quickly. He followed. He heard the gate click behind her. In the darkness, among the trees and shrubbery, grew the outlines of a horse and a man leading it.

"Better take a dagger too," advised Danilla.

Rasumov jumped into the saddle, thrust into his sash the dagger the servant brought him.

"Never leave the house," he said hurriedly, "unless the jester—Crack, his name is—sends word. And if anything threatens my betrothed, use your head and do everything to prevent it. Goodby."

"And if Streletzs will be asking about you?"

"Tell them I am waiting the Czar's orders. Now go in. I am going through the orchards and along the river. The fewer people see me, the better."

He began to walk his horse through the garden and the orchard adjoining, in the direction of the river. Reaching it, he turned his mount to the right, spurred, and at a brisk canter began the long journey that lay before him. The horse's hoofs touched lightly the soft ground of the path, which followed the windings of the river until the highway was reached, into which Rasumov turned. Here he urged his mount to greater speed.

Before him and on all sides stretched the open country of wood, field and river, dark and indistinct in the gloom. The night was windy; the skies covered with heavy clouds. Only rarely the moon would show her bright disk from behind them to shower silver radiance over the stormy earth, and the young officer then would see the tall trees swinging their branches in the wind like so many giant arms; would see the river, blue and tumultuous in the sudden moonlight, the endless stretch of dark fields and the prolongation of the highway along which he was galloping, a gray ribbon winding into the blackness.

After a two-hour ride he came to a hamlet by the roadside and turned into a tavern to change his horse. As soon as the fresh mount was led out he jumped into saddle and, galloping furiously, continued his course.

In this manner, changing horses every two hours and never halting for a rest, Rasumov neared the Troitsky Monastery. He met with no misadventure on the way, for the reason that the combat for power between the princess regent and Czar Peter was unique in that the population took but a passive interest in the issue. Not one man aside from the Czar's Poteshneys and the Princess' Streletzs took up arms. The countryside, therefore, through which he passed, presented the peaceful aspect of everyday, normal life.

Peasants enlivened the fields with their song and bright dress as they reaped the rich harvest. From the woods came the gay sound of the woodman's ax. Along the highway the drivers of the slow moving wagons would turn to look at the hurrying rider with curiosity. Why such speed and the arms when there was no war, they wondered.

RASUMOV came into sight of the monastery just as the sun was setting behind a distant wood. Involuntarily, he slackened his pace a bit. Out of the dark green of the timbered slopes and velvet pastures rose the great monastery, sharp and luminous as some legendary city. It was white, topped with a forest of gilded cupolas and crosses which burned orange in the slanting rays, while the crenelations of its high walls blushed rosily with the sunset's reflection. In size it was as large as the Moscow Kremlin, but in beauty it surpassed all dreams of the best architects and artists Russia had known.

Since the Twelfth Century the Troitsky Monastery had been a strong fortress. From its numerous turrets along the walls protruded the black barrels of guns which had been used most effiectively on many a Tartar horde in days gone by. Here fled the Russian Czars when the Moscow Kremlin was on the point of surrender; and the Troitsky Monastery never betrayed their trust in its strength.

Rasumov cantered through the massive white gates and, reining in and beckoning to one of the brown robed monks, inquired the way to the Czar Peter's quarters. The monastery yard was full of soldiers wearing the blue kaftans and blue furred hats of Poteshney regiments. They were all very young men. Not one of them was over twenty. They regarded the young Streletz officer with suspicion as, dismounting, he walked past them at the heels of the monk.

Inside, at one of the doors in the long passage, a Poteshney soldier stood guard. The monk spoke to him. The guard opened the door and the monk, making a sign to Rasumov to wait, went in. In a few minutes he returned to say that his Majesty would see him. The young man sighed with relief. He was in time then to warn the boy Czar of the impending danger. Holding his hat under his arm, he entered.

It was a large room, with walls bare and white, and had but one enormous window, at which sat two people, their heads bent close over a thick volume open before them on the table. The warm glow of sunset cast their hands and faces in sharp relief against their dark, simple dress. One was a dark haired, dark eyed man, in age about forty; the other a boy of sixteen, with a plump, rosy face and large, black, bulging eyes. He was tall and strongly built. The dark haired man was Monsieur François Leforte, a French adventurer, rascally and shrewd, but very clever and learned and a genius as tutor and counselor of his companion, the Czar Peter. He taught the Czar everything.

As Rasumov entered, the two raised their heads and nodded to him to come nearer. The young officer explained the reason for his journey hither. At the news, the boy Czar flushed with indignation, while the Frenchman snapped his fingers and laughed.

"What further proofs does your Majesty need of your sister's aspirations?" he cried triumphantly. "The Czar will not believe me," he went on, turning to Rasumov, "when I say that the princess regent plans to rob him of his throne. His Majesty is loath to go to war against her because he believes her to be guarding the throne for him. What bosh!"

He snapped his fingers again and laughed, pulling at his short pointed mustache.

"But her Streletzs are devoted to her," the Czar defended himself shyly. "And the people might take her side."

"The people, your Majesty," remarked Rasumov, "are not interested in this combat. They will take neither side."

"Just what I told him!" took up Leforte hotly. "And as to Streletzs, here's one!" He put his hand on Rasumov's shoulder. "You are with us heart and soul? Ah? And are there many like you?" He looked intently into Rasumov's eyes.

"Quite a number, monsieur. And we are only waiting for the Czar's orders. Why not march on Moscow right away?"

"Against the regent? Against my sister?" cried the Czar. "I have no proofs that—"

"When you do have proofs," cut in the Frenchman dryly, "you won't be here to act upon them."

"I can't believe that—that she wants to kill me," stammered the Czar.

"Eh!" The Frenchman closed the volume before them and arose, stretching himself and yawning. "To talk with you makes me sleepy!"

The door opened at this moment and a tall young man entered, bearing a tray on which stood a large jug of fresh milk. He wore a long black kaftan with figures of jugs, goblets and knives, the emblems of his office, embroidered in silver all over it. He was the Czar's food-bearer. The Czar, after the custom of members of the Russian royal house at the time, afraid of being poisoned, received his food only from the hands of his own food-bearer, the most trusted man of his household.

"Monsieur Leforte," remarked the Czar with a smile as he took the jug from the food-bearer, "makes me drink four jugs of milk daily."

"I want his Majesty to grow into a healthy man," explained Leforte to Rasumov. "Milk, cold baths, two hours' exercise, four hours' study, four hours' drill—that's his Majesty's daily routine. And don't you think—" talking thus he approached the Czar unhurriedly and, just as the boy raised the jug to his lips, the Frenchman very calmly took it from him—"his Majesty looks splendid? Following a regime like that, he will live to a very old age. Oh, yes, barring of course such trifles as—Gavrilla—" he turned to the food-bearer—"you have been a good servant to his Majesty. His Majesty thinks it's time to show you his appreciation. His Majesty gives you his own jug of milk to drink, Gavrilla!"

The Czar looked at his tutor with surprise, but did not speak.

"Well, Gavrilla," the Frenchman went on, "take it. Drink it."

"Monsieur," stammered the food-bearer.

Rasumov saw him turn ghastly pale.

"Monsieur," the food-bearer whispered. "It is too high an honor—"

"Indeed, no!" The Frenchman inclined the jug toward him. "You deserve the honor. Drink it."

"Monsieur," protested the other desperately, as he took the jug.

"Drink it, I said," repeated Leforte calmly.

The man, with one imploring look at the Czar, raised the jug to his lips and began to drink. Then he stopped.

"No," the Frenchman said, "drink it to the end."

The man drank on obediently.

His face was deathly pale and drenched with sweat when, emptying the jug, he placed it with a shaking hand on the table. He then stood a moment as if waiting for something. Suddenly he swayed, and fell to the floor in horrible convulsions.

"You see?" was all the Frenchman said. "It's best to play safe."

"My best man! My friend!" cried the Czar, and he ran to the man and bent over him, grasping him by the shoulders. "Did you sell me, Gavrilla? How could you? Tell me, tell me it was not for money surely you sold me!"

"No, not money," the man whispered, his eyes dull with approaching death. "My sweetheart in Moscow . . . The princess regent took her—into Kremlin. Sent a messenger—here. Would kill the girl if—if I do not give your Majes—"

He grew limp in the Czar's arms.

Leforte clapped his hands.

"Take him out," he ordered the guard. "The poor fellow had a fit. Yes, he is dead."

"Well," he said, as the three were alone again, "what more proofs does your Majesty need?"

He sat down at the table again and opened his book.

"None, monsieur." The Czar laid his hand on his tutor's arm while tears gathered in his black eyes. "We will march at once on Moscow. Monsieur," he added, "you saved my life—"

"Tut, tut! What nonsense. Forget it. Sit down now and finish your lesson."

"But the troops! The orders! We must start at once," cried the Czar and Rasumov with one voice.

"No reason to break the routine," said Leforte. "What kind of Czar will you make, if you jump like this from one thing to another? No, we have half an hour to finish this page. As to getting ready, everything *is* ready. What do you think I'm here for? We've been ready for a month. Moreover, the soldiers are at this moment having their dinner. Would you have them go to war on an empty stomach? Sit down. That's right!"

He pushed the book toward his pupil, who at once began to read aloud.

"And I? What shall I do?" asked Rasumov hesitatingly. Involuntarily he addressed himself for orders to the Frenchman.

"Ride back to Moscow. Get your Streletzs ready. We will start in about two hours. By midnight tomorrow we shall be attacking Kremlin."

Rasumov saluted.

"Thank you, Rasumov," said the Czar, smiling.

"Yes," the Frenchman added. "You were in the very nick of time. Your news has made me suspicious of every one."

The young man saluted again and went out. In the yard stood a monk holding a fresh mount. Rasumov jumped into the saddle and rode out through the white gates. Dusk was falling. He spurred along the winding highway at a brisk canter.

As he rode he thought of the Frenchman. He had had his doubts before as to the boy Czar's coming out a conqueror in the battle with the princess regent. But now, having seen and understood the counselor and tutor of the Czar, he felt assured of success. This adventurer Leforte would have made a king of any one.

Rasumov recalled how the Frenchman, some years ago, had instructed Peter, then a boy of nine, in his games at soldiers. In the three villages where the Czar took up his residence at his sister's command, the Czar gathered about him the boys of the village and sons of the local nobles and, under the masterly direction of Leforte, organized youthful regiments which, in a short time, became known as Poteshney, the appelation derived from the Russian word meaning play. Which circumstance explained the youthful age of the Czar's troops.

"Yes, with Leforte to direct us," thought Rasumov as he galloped on through the gathering darkness, "we might win."

HE REACHED Moscow at dawn, but instead of taking the path along the river, he rode through the streets. He thought it advisable to take a look at his gate before venturing in. He rode past his fence, slackening his pace as he neared the gates. And there he read his fate—the large red cross. The house, the garden, what he could see of them, looked as if abandoned. Had they got Danilla, or had the fellow received warning from the jester and made his escape? He felt strongly tempted to dismount and enter the house, but restrained himself. Spurring, he fled down the street at a gallop.

As he turned the corner, and before he had time to pull up his mount, some ten armed men, who had apparently been stationed there in wait for him, threw themselves in his way. He stopped, his hand on his sword, but a powerful blow on his head from one of the assailants knocked him out of the saddle. Before his limp body reached the cobbles, ten pairs of strong arms caught it up, placed it on one of the mounts and, one of the captors leading the horse by the bridle, the others surrounding it on all sides, the little procession started in the direction of the Kremlin.

When Rasumov regained consciousness and opened his eyes, he did not all at once realize just where he was, or remember the events which had brought him there. His head still ached from the blow. He knew only that black darkness met his gaze on all sides and he had a momentary feeling of being in some kind of void. Filthy air stifled him. Little by little, however, he recalled his ride past his house, the red cross on his gate, the sudden attack. He surmised that in all probability he was now in one of the dreaded dungeons of the Kremlin.

Stretching out his hands, he groped about him, and his fingers came in contact with litter which he guessed to be straw. The discovery confirmed his conjectures as to his whereabouts. And gradually, his eyes becoming used to the darkness, he discerned, one after another, the details of his prison: The damp stone walls; the dirty floor; a stool beside him with a mug of water on it—which he grasped with both hands immediately and emptied at a gulp. The taste of the water was bitter in his mouth. It smelled as did the dungeon; of rotting straw, rats, dirty human bodies, foul, dank air . . .

The place was very small. There was no window. A low stone door displayed a heavy iron lock and above it, some three feet from the ground, a small aperture set with iron bars. Through it issued what dim light there was in the dungeon. Rasumov only now discovered with pleasant surprise that he was neither bound nor chained, though there were set in the walls heavy iron rings and chains for that purpose.

Still feeling somewhat faint, he rose slowly to his knees and, stretching out his arms cautiously, felt with his hands for the ceiling. He knew that dungeons here were too low for one to stand. His precaution was justified. His hands felt the slippery surface of old stone. And as he was on his knees, he crawled to the door for the purpose of further explorations. His face pressed to the bars, he peered out.

He was looking into a long corridor, which stretched as far as he could see upon either hand. But there was more light there. He found out soon whence it came. Not far from the door of his dungeon, there was a barred aperture in the ceiling giving out into open air. Rasumov saw a patch of night sky, studded with stars and flooded with moonlight. Then he was not as deep underground as he had imagined! Just why this trifling discovery should console him, the young officer did not know; but it did. He took heart. He gazed at that patch of sky, thinking over the events of the last few days.

He wondered how long he had been in the dungeon. The Poteshney troops with the boy Czar and the adventurer Leforte were to have reached Moscow about midnight following his, Rasumov's, return from the Troitsky Monastery. How long had he been unconscious? Had it been hours, days? Suddenly he grew tense with fear.

It seemed to him he had caught the sound of cautious steps. Hastily he crawled back to his heap of straw and lay down on it. He listened. There it was again. It was like an echo of some one walking hurriedly, yet cautiously, somewhere in the distance, as if in some wall nearby, only still lower underground than he, Rasumov, lay. And then the sound changed. It grew real, distinct. The sound of hurried feet accompanied by a light clinking noise. It came from the corridor, and was nearing gradually.

Rasumov lay motionless, holding his breath. Who was coming? Jailer? Guard? Executioner? . . The princess regent never forgave her political enemies, but forget them she did quickly, as soon as they were done away with. But those who had dared to spurn her woman's smile she never forgave, nor did she ever forget them. And she liked these unfortunates to remember her long and in the most painful fashion. Rasumov did not know whether she had discovered his sympathy for Czar Peter, but he knew that she had found out his unwillingness to answer her smiles. The red cross on his gate was explained.

And now what fate awaited him? What half life, half death existence lay in store for him by the princess regent's commands? He closed his eyes.

The steps and that clinking noise were very near now. They were at the door. He heard the sound of some one breathing hard. Some one, he felt, had put his face close to the bars in the door of his dungeon. And then he heard his name whispered. Not daring to believe his ears, he raised his head quickly.

THE long nose and enormous grinning mouth of the ugly dwarf, the princess' jester, were pressed against the bars. The jester placed a finger to his lips and the gesture set all the little bells of his brilliant costume to tinkling gaily. He beckoned Rasumov to come nearer. The young man crawled to the door and, putting his hand through the bars, pressed the jester's.

"Crack, if you knew how glad I am to see you!" he whispered, gulping with emotion. "Tell me, quick, how long have I been here? And where am I? What part of Kremlin?"

"They brought you here," replied the jester, "this afternoon."

"This afternoon!" repeated Rasumov in a whisper. "Thank God! And what time is it now?"

"Going on past midnight," said the dwarf. "I—" Suddenly a heavy sound as of thunder rolled over their heads. "The cannon," said the dwarf. "The Poteshney with Czar Peter in command are attacking Kremlin. They came up only a short while ago, and that's why I managed to get away. The princess is too busy now to miss me. You should have seen the bustle and scurry the sight of Poteshney raised in the palace, in all of the Kremlin, in fact. You see, the princess never expected even to see her brother again, let alone marching to war against her. She was sure he had been poisoned. Thus she had no time to send out her troops to prevent his entrance into Moscow. And now she has barricaded herself in the Kremlin."

Another thunder of cannon tore the stuffy air about them.

"The saints, Crack!" cried Rasumov. "I hope they win!"

"Who?"

"Czar Peter, of course."

"So you are on his side? Then I too am for Czar Peter," the jester very gravely declared. "If there's anything I could do to help—"

"You can, Crack. You can. But first go on with what you were saying. The princess has barricaded herself in the Kremlin. Now, are there many troops in the Kremlin?"

"Only her Streletzs, save those like you, sir," explained the dwarf with a laugh. "All the gates are closed and guarded. The soldiers are each at his post. There's not a window in Kremlin without a dozen muskets or cannon sticking out. I tell you, it's a pretty sight! The princess running about from one man to another, the captains following her like chicks after a hen . . . It's no woman's business this, to be in command of a fortress."

"But she has her counselors—Prince Havansky and—"

"Both dead drunk. They were in the midst of a gay supper when the news of the Czar's approach was sprung on them. You see, they were celebrating the Czar's death. They were so sure that that food-bearer of his— But, heigho! It will be a pretty fight."

"But how many men has she?"

"Well, I am afraid you'll be disappointed. I'm afraid, *voevoda,* the Czar will never take Kremlin. You—"

"Go on! Speak!"

"There are about ten thousand men in the Kremlin."

"Good God!" cried Rasumov. "Then he will never make it. The Czar has but a poor six thousand. And he was counting on the Streletzs I have been gathering these last months. And now, I here—they won't make a move without my order. Crack, you must get me out of here!"

The jester shook his ugly head mournfully.

"I can't."

"Crack!"

"I've no keys. The chief jailer has them. I tried to get them from him before coming here. Pretended I was a jailer, you know, in fun, and made him roll with laughter, and he let me wear his hat and hold his hatchet. But the keys! Nothing will make him part with the keys."

"Crack, you must get me out!"

"He'll never give me the keys. They open all the doors in this part of the building. All the doors into this corridor."

"But you—how did you get here, then?"

The jester laughed slyly.

"Ho, how did I get here? I can get anywhere about Kremlin. I know all the secret doors, stairs, traps, passages, under the ground, above the ground. Ho! I am the boss of Kremlin. That's how I feel. No one but I knows old Kremlin so thoroughly."

The thunder of cannon interrupted him again. There came to them shouts, shrieks and triumphant yells from outside and from above them. The sound as if of something heavy falling. Loud words of command sharp in the momentary lull. All the familiar sounds of battle.

"I know all the secret entrances into the Kremlin," the jester went on boastingly.

"Wait!" Rasumov said. "From which sides are the Poteshneys attacking?"

"From the Red Square and the right and left walls."

"What about the wall on the river side?"

"Empty there."

"Is there a secret entrance into the Kremlin from the river?"

"Yes. I alone know of it. It hasn't been used for a hundred years. On the very brink of the river."

"Now listen, Crack. You know the house of Voevoda Morosov?"

"Yes."

"You will take this ring to him—" Rasumov took a large ring off his finger and gave it to the jester. "This ring. He will know then that he can trust you. And this—" He produced out of the folds of his kaftan a small wooden tablet and a lead pencil, without which no cultured man ventured out in those days. He began to write quickly on this tablet. "You will give this tablet to Voevoda Morosov. Can you read?" he asked suddenly. He thought it best not to trust the jester too implicitly.

"No."

"Cross yourself."

The jester crossed himself obediently.

"Give him the tablet and ask him to give you two armed men. When you bring them here, conceal them somewhere in this corridor and get the jailer to come here under some pretense."

"I understand."

"Good. Hurry then."

Rasumov watched the dwarf disappear from sight, then he lay down at the door to wait.

THE noise about the ancient fortress was deafening now. The attack evidently was at its height. The shrieks and shouts of the troops storming, and of those repulsing the attack, came to the dungeon now with terrible clarity. Rasumov, now that he knew the number of the princess' men, held little hope for Czar Peter's success. Perhaps if the plan he had outlined to Voevoda Morosov could be accomplished . . . But should Morosov for some reason refuse to act on his suggestion? . . .

He did not know how long he lay there waiting for the jester's return. It seemed ages to him. And then came hurried steps, and the jester's face was once more pressed against the bars.

"The men I brought are behind that turn." He pointed to the left. "Morosov says he will do as you say. And now I go for the jailer."

He disappeared.

In a short while he returned. Rasumov heard a thick guffaw and the click of the jailer's keys, and the gay ringing of jester's bells. The latter was probably going through his antics for the jailer's benefit. They passed the door. Rasumov had a glimpse of a very fat man, shaking with laughter. Their steps died away gradually. Then there came to him a sudden break in the jailer's guffaws, then the noise of a scuffle. And almost instantly there was the jester's face at the bars, his eyes aglow with merriment. The key turned in the lock and the heavy door swung open. In a second Rasumov was in the corridor, where he could at last stand up straight and stretch out his benumbed limbs.

The two Streletzs saluted him respectfully.

"And now, Crack," Rasumov said, "lead us to that door opening on the river."

"Follow me," said Crack.

And he led the way, his little bells tinkling musically, Rasumov at his heels and the two men after him in single file. They walked at least a mile, it seemed to Rasumov. And probably it was. Along gloomy passages, through dungeons, where they had to crawl their way on knees and hands, then through passages again. They descended slippery steps, mounted circular stairways. It was all underground and pitch-dark. The jester, however, knew his way about, and seemed to feel as unconcerned as a mole in this endless labyrinth of secret doors, traps, small stone bridges across underground pools which reeked of decay and slime. At last darkness diminished. Dim light filtered through a skylight in the gloomy passage, disclosing a patch of star studded and moonlit sky. A blank wall loomed ahead of them.

Toward it the jester led them, and here he sat on his haunches and, with the help of the others, removed a large slab of stone in the floor. A heavy pair of levers was disclosed.

"Turn the right one up." the jester directed the men. "And pull down the other. That's right. Slowly. They are heavy to work."

The men set to it. And slowly and noiselessly a part of the blank wall began to slide into the wall intersecting it. First but a crack, then gradually growing wider and wider, and when the opening measured about four feet in width the jester said—

"It goes no farther."

"No need. We'll manage," Rasumov said.

He stood in this secret doorway, gazing at the scene before him. At his feet the black waves of the Moscow River broke with a splash against the stones of the high bank, the dark water reflecting tumultuously the red and yellow glow of numerous torches. But otherwise, the scene before Rasumov's eyes, save for the thunder and din of the battle, was serenely peaceful and strangely empty. Pastures and cornfields, flooded with moonlight, stretched endlessly on the opposite side of the river, which here was but some two hundred yards in width. To the right and left of the desolate expanse glowed here and there dim lights of Muscovite dwellings.

And as he looked, Rasumov espied suddenly what he had been awaiting so impatiently. Out of the cornfield on the opposite bank, a dark figure rose. Another—a third . . . He left off counting them. Like ghosts, one after the other, they descended the high bank and on reaching the water fell into it with a light splash, and started to swim across the river toward the spot where Rasumov stood, the hatchets in their hands, which they held high above the waves, glistening silver in the moonlight. They were his men under the command of Morosov. As they reached the bank where Rasumov stood they scrambled up the steps and, shivering and dripping water, began to file past him through the opening and into the passage.

The last man to mount the slippery steps greeted Rasumov with a broad grin.

"Danilla! I thought they got you."

"They were after you, not me. As soon as I saw the red cross on the gates I hurried to Morosov and stayed there till you sent that ugly messenger of yours. Pretty quiet here, eh?" He grinned.

And he entered the passage, Rasumov after him. Together, with the jester directing, they closed the secret door.

In a very short while, the men began to file out of the underground passages of the Kremlin into the open and free space of the huge yard which ran along the river wall. It was empty. Led by Rasumov, they marched in column formation in the direction of the battle. Turning a corner of the building, the scene of Kremlin repulsing attack, colorful and magnificent, unfolded before them, all black, silver and blue, and splashed abundantly with the blood and gold of the flaming torches. The blunt teeth of Kremlin walls were covered with dark figures.

Up the ladders propped against the walls more and more of them climbed to take the place of those who, struck by bullets, tottered and fell into the heaving crowds which swarmed along the walls. Diminutive and dark looked the men busy about the great cannons in the turrets and bastions. And from the innumerable windows of the palace and the various buildings surrounding it, they were firing incessantly.

Rasumov turned to his men, raised his sword, and they rushed forward with yells and triumphant shouts, swinging their hatchets, into the very midst of Princess Sophia's men. It was so sudden, so unreal, this attack from behind them. A momentary lull, and then the shout of "Treason!" But the young officer's soldiers were already climbing the ladders, battling hand-to-hand with the regent's Streletzs; flinging them down, climbing on, higher and higher toward the great cannons . . .

The sun was rising as the sixteen year old Czar Peter rode through the massive gates opened by Rasumov and his men, and entered the Kremlin proper. The Frenchman Leforte's black charger, beside the Czar's white mount, pranced and danced, its master reining in sharply to jump to the ground and run to the young Czar to assist him to alight.

"Welcome, Czar," he cried loudly, and all the men, who had flocked to see the triumphant entry of the rightful monarch into the palace of his fathers, took up the cry with a joyous shout.

The Czar could only bow silently. He

was too agitated to speak. Tall, broad shouldered, his young face shining with victory, he stood a moment, his strong hand on the mount's neck, looking about him. It was an unpleasant sight that met his eyes. The vast square was strewn with dead bodies. Blood was everywhere.

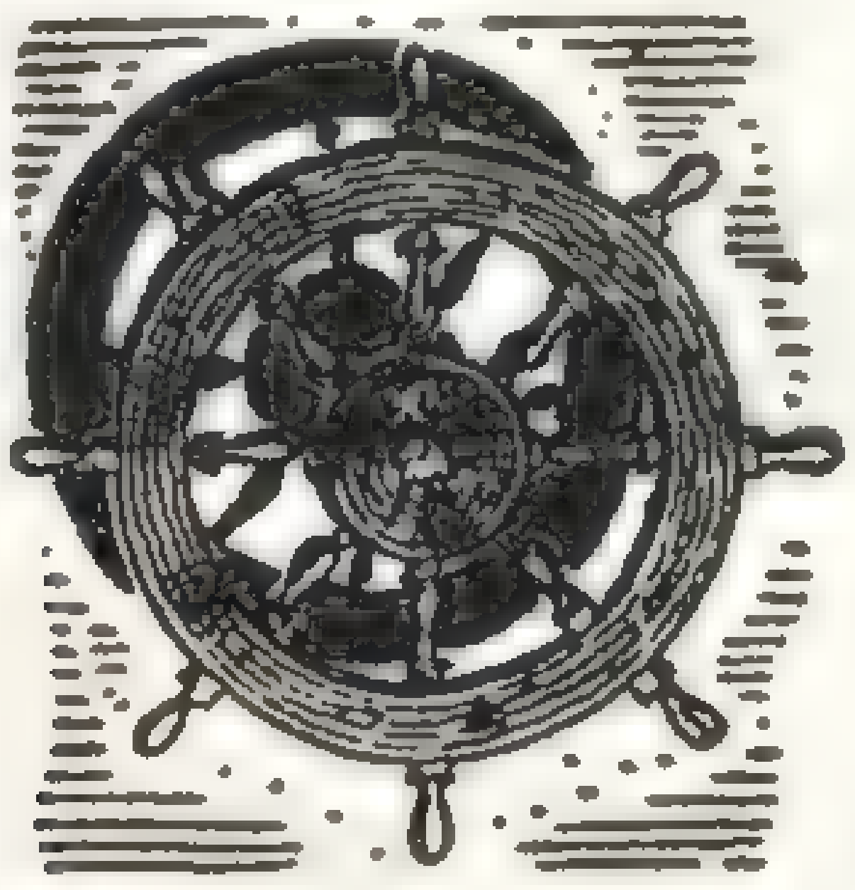
"Take care of the wounded," the Czar said quietly to one of the officers at his side. "Remember, all of the wounded, no matter on which side they had fought. And you—" he turned to Rasumov—"how will I ever be able to thank you? Without your aid, I'm afraid I would never have been Czar."

"It is not of my doing, Czar," Rasumov said. "Here's the jester. He made the trick possible."

"This little dw—" the Czar stopped abruptly—"this little man?" he amended. "Come here. Would you like to be my jester from now on? God knows I'll have little need of your art, but stay with me as my friend."

Crack kissed the Czar's hand and, as the Czar mounted the steps leading into the palace, he ran by his side shaking his rattle.

"I tell you," the Frenchman said as he followed with Rasumov, "he will make a great Czar. You don't know him as I do. He is a genius." And the tutor's eyes sparkled with pride. "It is a pity I won't live to hear him called Peter the Great."

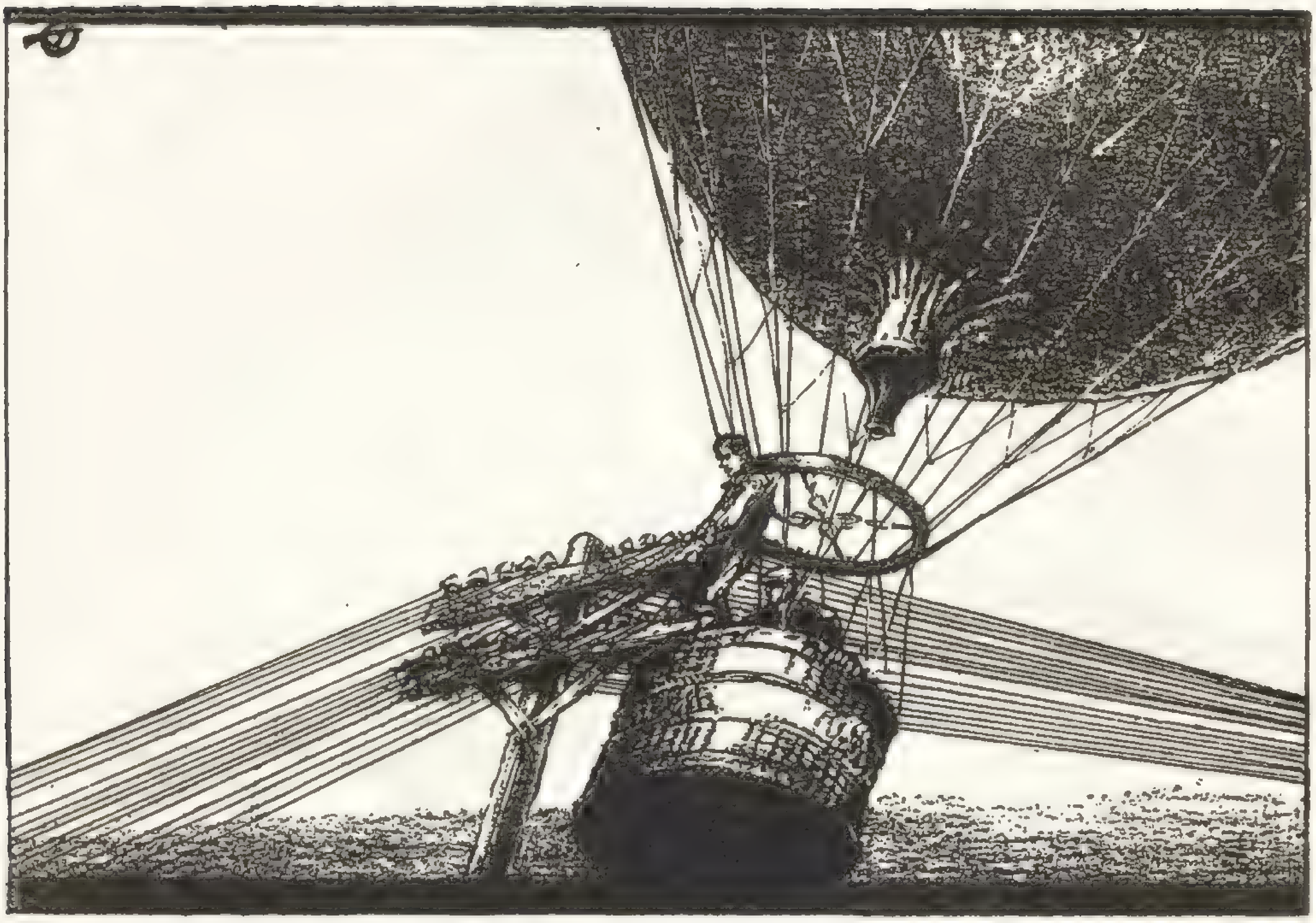


Furling the Foresail

By BILL ADAMS

D'YE mind the words the mate would bawl when the foresail was clued up,
When you were a young 'prentice lad—a green young first voyage pup?
D'ye mind the way you hated him that time he glanced at you?
How mad you were to see the grins of all her hard case crew?
"Sailors to windward! Farmers to leeward! Aloft and furl it now!"
D'ye mind the way the graybacks burst their foam about her bow?
D'ye mind the way she'd lift and reel? D'ye mind the thunderous gloom?
How black it was along the sea beyond her leaping boom?
D'ye mind the way your marrow froze? How bitter stung the hail?
How soaked you were from neck to toes? And how the bellying sail
Strained in its gear? They'd called the cook, and Chips, and Sails and steward.
"Sailors to windward," said the mate. "You boys go down to leeward."
D'ye mind the cursing of the crew when we swarmed up aloft
And fought our way to windward out, scorning to take the soft,
The easier, furling down to lee? Aye, bloody was the stain
From our young hands upon the sail when we came down again!
D'ye mind then how the boatswain looked, forgetting gibe and jest,
Because we'd tried a sailor's job and did it with the best?

We're stranded now. You there, me here. And many an old chum's dead.
What would you give to hear again those words the chief mate said
When we jumped down from out her shrouds? . . . Ah, wasn't that good fun,
To hear a smiling chief mate say, "All right, you boys! Well done!"



DISTANCE

By LELAND S. JAMIESON

DON MARIS, until I wormed it from him piecemeal yesterday, was the only living soul who knew exactly what took place when death lanced like a snake's tongue from the clouds above and touched instant flame to the crown of the giant free balloon, the *Hortense.* For Don was standing within two feet of Ewart Adams, the pilot of the *Hortense,* when it happened; he heard the ear splitting clap of the bolt, and his body went numb, his brain groggy, and acrid ozone bit into his nostrils. He fell, his legs mere sticks of wood, and sprawled across Ewart Adams' body where it had crumpled on the basket floor in death.

But Don Maris didn't know, in that instant, that Ewart was dying. He thought Ewart had been stunned, as he himself was stunned, but more severely. He managed to get to his knees, clutching the basket rim with one hand, and held an index finger at Ewart's throat. He felt a pulse beat very faintly.

At the same moment he heard the roar of fire at the top of the great sphere of fabric which was the *Hortense.* He knew fear—fear as only airmen can know it when they face death in searing flames. He knew that, in an instant, fire must reach through the flimsy envelop and touch the hydrogen within; that, when this happened, the universe would explode above his head and both he and Ewart would die.

What should he do? Jump with his parachute and save himself? There were then no human eyes to see his actions, for the *Hortense* was at two thousand feet, riding through a thunderstorm. He was alone with Ewart Adams. But Don thought Adams was alive. What he did makes one of the finest epics of the air in the history of balloon racing. What he did explains why he can, if he should choose, wear the Medal of Honor on his breast—the highest token of esteem awarded by our country.

Don was a young officer, thin, small, erect, smart—as smart but no smarter in appearance than hundreds of other young officers. As intelligent, but no more so, than a dozen of his rivals for a place on the Gordon Bennett Cup team that would go to Brussels in the Fall to race against the entrants from other countries of the world. As skilled in free ballooning as many others, he was by no means particularly outstanding as a pilot.

One thing only did he possess above all rivalry—a reputation for the most phenomenal luck that any officer of the Air Corps ever had, or probably ever will attain. This luck, in the four years of his commissioned service, had become legendary.

"As lucky as Don Maris!"

And that, any one would readily assure you, was lucky.

There was the case when he overslept an observation mission while attached to heavier-than-air at Kelly Field. The pilot, after waiting for a time, took some one else; and ten minutes after getting off the ground, a propeller tip flung itself away and collapsed a wing strut. The ship spun in from five hundred feet.

There was the time when he jumped from a blimp—a practise jump—and miscalculated his position above the field and landed on the steeply slanting roof of a water tank a hundred feet above the ground. His parachute collapsed, of course, and he started to slide off the roof. But a loose bolt head caught him by the fabric of the seat of his pants and held him there until aid came!

A dozen times when other men would most certainly have died, Don Maris somehow lived.

At twenty-six he had had almost every thrill that balloons and airplanes can give a man, but his one ambition still was unaccomplished. He loved a free balloon; and above all other kinds of flying he liked to race a free balloon. Throughout the lighter-than-air school, and for three years, he had lived and dreamed of the time when, as pilot of the Army's entry, he would win the American elimination race, and then, whether in this country or abroad, would take the honors for the International Cup.

Each year, at the announcement of the elimination races, he had drafted a careful letter to his colonel making formal application for a place as a pilot in one of the Army's entries; and each year the letter had come back with the curt announcement that the pilots had already been selected. This fourth year he wrote his letter as usual, but he took it personally to headquarters. The colonel's adjutant, a fat faced, tactless first lieutenant, stopped Don at the colonel's office door.

"What's on your mind, Maris?"

"I'd like to see the colonel."

"Something official, or personal?" the adjutant inquired importantly. He suspected already what it was Don wanted. For three successive years he had written acknowledgments to Don's letters.

Don had the letter in his pocket.

"Personal," he said. "And quite important."

The adjutant smirked.

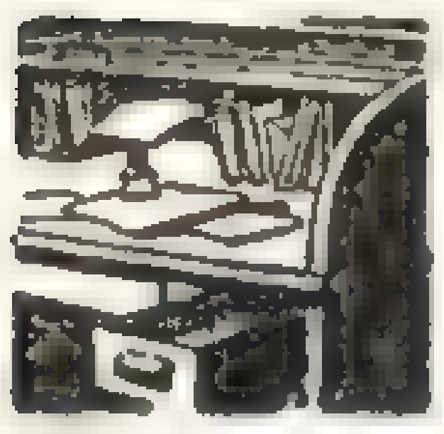
"If it's about the elimination race, young fella, I can handle it right here. There aren't any vacancies."

Don said very seriously—

"It's something personal."

The adjutant got grudgingly to his feet, exhibiting a pudgy stomach and a blouse which had been worn badly from rubbing on his desk.

"The colonel's probably busy," he predicted. "But come on."



COLONEL BLOUNT, however, was not very busy. The adjutant rapped three times on the door and, when a loud voice bade him come in, opened the door and stuck his head inside.

"Lieutenant Maris wishes to see you, sir. Says it's personal. Now, if the Colonel's busy—"

Colonel Blount, his big frame towering in his chair above the plate glass of his desk, had, as a matter of fact, nothing whatever to do at that moment. He liked Maris. He said:

"Not busy. Send him in."

"Yes, sir. And shall I remain, sir?"

"Not necessary, is it?" The colonel smiled slightly. "Didn't Maris say it was personal?"

Don, at last, was standing at attention in front of Blount's desk. The letter was still in his pocket.

"Colonel," he said, "I've been trying for three years to enter the elimination balloon races." He was nervous and a trifle awed, but determined. "There never are any vacancies, but I want to get in the races this year, somehow, so I asked to see you personally. Every letter I've written has been indorsed back to me instead of going on through channels to the chief of Air Corps, and I wondered if there might be something in my record—something—"

"I don't recall seeing your applications," Colonel Blount replied. "But don't you think you're a bit young to get a chance like that? You know, it's a pretty big thing."

"Yes, sir. But I want to get it, and if letters never get along any farther than this, I never will. What I came for was to ask if you would indorse a letter through to Washington for me. I might not be any better off, but it would go in file, at least."

Colonel Blount smiled engagingly.

"Glad to. Have my secretary indorse it for approval and I'll see that it goes in."

Don reached into his pocket.

"I'd rather you saw the letter first," he said. "And I want to explain."

"You know, of course, that this thing has no chance? There isn't any equipment left for this year, even if they gave it to you."

"That's just the point, sir. I found an old balloon out in the hangar—hasn't been used for several years—the sergeant didn't even know it was there. I want to enter it as a special contestant. Equip it with communication and range finding radio, for the purpose of gathering scientific data—communications problems to free balloons, besides making a study of air currents, winds, and so forth. That way I'd get in the race—this year."

The colonel smiled tolerantly.

"Just what chance do you think you'd have, Maris, of winning the races with that old soap bubble?"

"Perhaps not much, sir. But I'm sure to learn something, and that would be for the good of the Service. And if I got in this race, and made any kind of a showing at all, I might get a regular place next year. I didn't have any idea that old balloon was out there, or I would have asked for it sooner."

He handed Blount the typed page and stood breathlessly awaiting the other's decision.

"Rather a far fetched idea, don't you think—now really?" Blount asked, after perusing the request at length.

"Perhaps it sounds so, sir, but I think it would be for the good of the Service, if conducted properly."

Blount laughed heartily.

"You young chaps have the most ambitious ideas for the improvement of the Service! However, knowing as I do what the chief of Air Corps will say to this, I see no harm in sending it on to him. If I thought there was a chance of his approving it, I would hesitate. Have my secretary write the indorsement."

The indorsement was duly incorporated in proper form, Blount signed it and his secretary put it into the chief's mail. The next day Don appeared again at headquarters before the adjutant and asked for ten days' leave. He was entitled to the leave, so he got it, for the purpose, according to his own statement, of recreation.

But that night he was on an eastbound train from St. Louis to Washington, and the following afternoon he talked by telephone with Senator Hastey, who was from his home town in Tennessee.

"Sam," Don said, when their greetings were finished and Hastey's surprise had abated, "I want you to take the chief of Air Corps to dinner tomorrow or the next evening. If you'll have dinner with me this evening, I'll tell you all about it."

"Wait a minute," Sam Hastey exclaimed. "Where do you get off having me order the chief of Air Corps around at will? He might not be hungry, or he might prefer other company. I don't even know the man well enough to invite him to dinner."

"Aren't you," Don demanded, "slated to be on the Military Affairs Committee next year? Aw, don't try that stuff—dad wrote me all about it. And the chief knows, of course. Don't tell me he won't come. All you've got to do is ask him urgently enough."

Hastey chuckled.

"You win! Who's been teaching you the ropes? But I can't ask him for tomorrow night, or the next either. And you'll have to put up with a party of my constituents tonight."

At dinner that evening Don explained what he was trying to do, and what Hastey was to tell the chief.

"You've got a lot of nerve," the Senator declared. "Do you realize that if I should bungle this, your name would be on the blacklist in a hurry? But I'll handle it. You go on back and fish until your leave is up, and when you get back to Scott Field the thing will be finished." Hastey's eyes grew bright. "Wish I could go with you! Who are you taking along?"

"Ewart Adams," Don said. "Great guy—stationed at Langley Field right now. We agreed three years ago if either of us put the deal over, we'd go together . . . If I'd discovered that old balloon before this, I would have tried it then. I just naturally didn't have the nerve to try to work this with a new bag—a racing one, at that. And, to tell the truth, I didn't think of it until I got dad's letter that you were getting to be somebody here in Washington."

EWART ADAMS, Don's tall, lanquid, fair haired, former room-mate, hurried to St. Louis on detached service in response to an enthusiastic telegram. He wouldn't believe Don's "luck" until he saw, with his own eyes, the indorsement from the chief of Air Corps, above that scrawling signature, giving the balloon *"35-476,* to Lieutenant Donald Maris for experimental work as an entrant in the year's elimination races to be held at Pittsburgh."

He had expected to be the aide, rather than the pilot, and still did, for Don had arranged this entirely by himself. But Maris said—

"Well, old socks, get yourself a coin, and see who's going to fly this bubble."

Ewart grinned at him.

"Nothing doing. You made the grade alone—I didn't even help you any. So I'm going to be a first class aide and do the work."

"Don't be a kibowitz—call it!" And Don flipped a dime, caught it deftly and slapped it to the back of his left hand.

"Tails," Ewart said reluctantly.

Don slowly removed his palm, fearing what he might discover there. It was tails. He flung the dime away.

"I always was a fool!" He laughed, but he was visibly disappointed.

Ewart studied him in silence for a time.

"I'm the aide, Don," he finally said. "You've worked your head off to get this flight, and I'm not going to take it away from you. What if you should win the cockeyed thing?"

"Don't be a fool," Don said. "We've as much chance to win that race as you have of going to heaven. We're on one of these extra-scientific expeditions, and if we can stretch our flight to three hundred miles, I'll be very much gratified—and surprised. But if we should make a good run and discover something new in ballooning, we may have a crack at it in a racing bag next year."

"We'll be in the race, at least," Ewart considered. "But that isn't enough to satisfy me. We've got a chance to win. If I'm going to be the pilot—which, sure enough, Don, isn't fair—we're going after distance. That means risking our necks a little more than the other fellows have to, but I'm willing. With you in that basket, and your luck, nothing could hurt us in a hundred years."

They had three weeks in which to prepare. Which, while seeming a long time, passed with astonishing rapidity. They named the balloon the *Hortense* and equipped her. They checked everything, checked it again, and made one all-night flight before they packed the big bag and expressed it to Pittsburgh.

Everybody who was anybody in lighter-than-air aviation was in Pittsburgh for the start of the races. Honeywell and Van Orman, outstanding pilots of many former races—Kepner, Anderson, Upson, Paegelow. Even Lahm, who had won the first Gordon Bennett in 1906, now a brigadier and almost ready to retire, could not forget the thrill of competition. There were banquets and dinners and speeches for two days, discussions and arguments and reminiscences; the comradeship of renewed friendships, the promises of keen rivalry, the plans, secretive and openly expositive, for coups that would add distance to some particular flight and thus win the coveted first place for this or that individual.

There was a great deal of jeering at the *Hortense*. Ewart Adams was a product of the war, and therefore widely acquainted among the members of the racing crews; and he withstood this buffeting good naturedly. Don Maris, however, was a second lieutenant, young, impetuous, rather dignified and very serious. He wanted to be taken seriously, which honor no one ever has or ever will accord the wearer of gold bars.

"Maris," one officer asked, the evening before the race, "tell me honestly how you got in this race with that old tub? She was racing when you wore knee pants."

"We're not racing," Don said. "We're studying air currents."

"God's own appointed, eh? Well, here's luck. I raced the old sack in 1922—if you make a hundred miles with her I'll buy the drinks."

"A hundred miles," drawled Ewart, seeing Don's color rise, "might win your old race. You might snag a telephone pole on the take-off, you know. Lots of things can happen. You'd look pretty sick if we'd beat you out, now wouldn't you?"

"Fat chance! Well, make a good report, my boys."

"Ewart," Don growled, when the other officer had gone, "we are going after distance! I've been laughed at for three days. Let's show 'em!"

The day of the race dawned clear, with no wind blowing at the ground or aloft, according to the upper air reports. But, by mid-morning, cumulus clouds had overcast the sky, the air was muggy with humidity. At noon it began to rain, showering for fifteen minutes and then ceasing, only to start again.

All pilots and their aides were at the starting field at noon, with no hope of having any race; but by mid-afternoon the sun broke through, the rain stopped and seemed finished, so the big bags were hurriedly inflated, growing like mushrooms from the ground.

Don and Ewart had fifth place in the lineup. The race started at five o'clock, when, in accordance with the programs of the event, the first balloon was to take off. It took off slowly, with grand majesty, cleared the trees and drifted east.

The second went out at 5:05; the third followed, and the fourth; and at 5:20 Ewart weighed off fifty pounds light—because of the weight of the old *Hortense*—barely cleared the trees and wires, and trailed after the three before him.

"Officially, Don, we are the escort," Ewart remarked in the utter silence which had followed the turmoil on the ground. "This is a wind race—we weigh so much we can't carry ballast enough to stay in the air more than twenty-four hours, so we've got to find a wind to take us places while we last. Feel like risking your neck?"

"Necks are expendable in this man's army." Don grinned. "So's the *Hortense*. Let's go away from here!"

Ewart looked about him. The three leading balloons were climbing rapidly; two of these, even while he looked, disappeared into the clouds. The third was swinging to the southeast in a cross current.

"Climb up in the rigging and tie the appendix closed," Ewart instructed. "The first thing we've got to do is save hydrogen."

"Fly it under pressure?" Don asked, skeptical. "This old bag's probably pretty rotten. Isn't there too much danger of its bursting as we go on up?"

"Reach for the valve cord, my child. I'll leave that for you to do. When we get one inch of water pressure on the manometer, let go some gas. We'll reach an equilibrium point quicker, and without overcontrolling. Save gas—stay up longer. And, old dear, if the bag bursts, we'll take to our parachutes without confusion."

Don laughed, feeling reckless.

"O.K," he agreed, and climbed up on the load ring and tied a cord tightly around the folds of the "appendix", or flexible inflation tube, at the bottom of the bag. He crawled back down and gave his attention to the instruments inside the basket.

THEY went up at a slow rate—three hundred feet a minute—to twenty-one hundred feet, where the balloon found its point of equilibrium and rode steadily with the slight wind from the west. But, here and there, breaks in the clouds above them exposed the balloon to the direct rays of the sun, and the added heat upon the bag, each time this occurred, sent them up; and when they ran again underneath a cloud the gas, cooling, contracted, and they settled. So they oscillated repeatedly, clinging as nearly as possible to their chosen altitude, disappointed at the lack of wind to speed them on. The three balloons before them had all disappeared; others trailed them now, above and below, like huge gray soap bubbles in the distance.

A balloon race demands of its participants skill, knowledge; and above all, perhaps, nerve of the kind that grows stronger with waiting. Speed, as we know it in these days of airplanes and motor cars, is hardly ever present; a balloonist who can find a steady wind of twenty miles an hour, and who can stay aloft two days or more, is likely to win his race.

Barring unusual conditions—storms and bad weather—a racing balloon can last it out without difficulty; it is big and light and buoyant. But Ewart Adams and Don Maris had a Service type balloon, a heavy duty bag and basket weighing a quarter of a ton more than any other balloon in the race—which represented to them a quarter of a ton less ballast. And often, in the final analysis, ballast wins a race. When there is no more sand to throw away, the pilot and his aide relieve themselves of other things, until they go, sometimes, to bare skin to lighten weight and keep their craft aloft.

Ewart watched his rivals as they went up past him, or trailed near the earth below. He saw that the higher ones were making better speed than the old *Hortense;* the lower ones were lagging; no one of them was making progress enough to take a definite lead and pull away. He decided, after this observation, to go up.

But before Ewart started to throw sand overside to lessen weight, Don pointed to the east directly ahead.

"Nice thunderhead making up," he remarked. "If we can get that thing behind us we'll go places."

"Right. And we'll know we've been for a rough ride on the way, too."

Just then an upward current of air jostled them. They could see the streaks of rain that seemed to pour, almost instantaneously, from the base of cloud. A bolt of lightning sizzled down, a quick streak of livid flame; and thunder leaped through the deadened air and rolled into their ears.

"Man, what a sweet playhouse that's going to be!" Don exclaimed, studying the clouds. "This barograph is going to register several antics. We'll study air currents when we get in there!"

"Check," said Ewart. "Get your parachute stuck on your back." He slipped his own harness on, clicked his leg straps into place, secured the webbing on his chest.

"Let her come—Good Lord, look at that!"

A parachute appeared through the driving rain, oscillating wildly in the wind of the storm center. A moment later a balloon, its gas gone and the bottom of the bag folded up within the netting—parachuting, after the parlance—followed.

"Got hit!" Don cried. "Somebody knocked out!"

And dimly they could make out the figure of a man lying half inside the basket, his torso hanging out, his arms dangling limply.

"Not so good," Ewart declared. "Fortunately he isn't on fire, so they'll both get down. I'd dread to jump with a chute right now and get caught in a down current. Break your legs like matchwood."

Lightning, now, was playing wildly through the clouds, flickering in repeated, hidden bursts, dying out, darting to the ground in white hot, writhing streaks. A spatter of rain rattled down on the crest of the *Hortense.* A gust caught them, eddying, and whirled the craft. Then suddenly they started into the storm itself, and wildly upward.

At two thousand feet a minute they shot into the clouds, riding on the vicious up-thrust of the wind. Don, watching his manometer calmly, valved when the pressure inside the bag became too great. He wished the appendix could be opened, to allow the gas to rush out automatically when necessary. But there was now no time to tear the cord away.

The clouds were a blanket of swirling mist on every side, darkly gray, wet and cold and clammy. Thunder shook the air; and lightning, crackling somewhere within that mass of storm, pinpointed every molecule of moisture and made it dazzle for an instant before turning instantly black again when the bolt had spent itself.

"Wish we had helium," Don laughed grimly. "One spark in the right place, and this thing will burn down around our ears."

Ewart smiled nervously, shrugged.

"No chance of that. Your luck, remember. But you'd better have your charm along today. We're going to need it—plenty!"

The rain, having ceased for a moment, began again, and mingled with the other voices of the storm. Somewhere, far below, they could hear the hiss of wind as it swept the air; the rumble and crackle and crash of lightning was on every hand. Hail suddenly streaked down from above, a quick flurry that beat softly on the fabric of the bag; and immediately thereafter they passed upward through that and encountered snow.

"We wanted wind!" Don cried, listening to those varied sounds. "We've got wind, fella!"

"Damn, yes! Hope we aren't going in the wrong direction."

THE up-thrust of the current played out suddenly, abandoned them; they started down again with more violence, even, than when they were catapulted up. Down—three thousand feet down in the first short minute. Ewart was dumping sand with frantic haste, trying to slow the craft. A downthrust had them in its clutches and flung them from the base of that black storm. Don forgot his instruments and turned to help Ewart. At two thousand feet they had dumped all their sand—their ballast was gone. The race, as far as they were concerned, it seemed, would be finished when they reached the ground.

It was, when they were battered from that cloud, raining torrents of blue-black water. The lightning, for the moment, seemed to have subsided; but the storm—which had a few minutes before looked small and innocent—had spread until it blotted out the sky on every side.

"Ballast gone," Ewart said shortly. "Boy, but we're going to smack that ground!"

Don made a move to the corner of the basket, tore loose the radio there installed, hurled it overboard. Ewart flung out a package of food, two thermos bottles, a box of cake that a kind old lady had given them before the take-off. As a final effort to lose weight, they cut away the drag rope and let it fall. But still they came down rapidly, although now at only slightly more than a thousand feet a minute. But that is plenty fast in a free balloon!

"Brace yourself!" Don cried. "Right on the snoozer. Hell, we're going to hit a house!"

They crashed down. They grabbed to the load ring above their heads and supported their weight. The basket struck solidly on a rise of ground fifty feet beyond the house, the bag settled down above it for an instant and they rebounded. They went up as rapidly as before they had been coming down.

"Close!" Ewart yelled. "Too close! Talk about your wind! We're doing forty miles an hour!"

And, in the teeth of a small gale, they had attained that, or an even greater speed. Heavy, now, from the loss of gas and from something they had not yet discovered in their excitement, the *Hortense* could not keep them in the air. She rebounded a hundred feet from that violent, rushing blow, oscillated up fifty more, and then again descended. But this time not so rapidly. She settled. A wooded land lay in her path, and from tree to tree she bumped the basket, smashing loose a branch here, an entire treetop there, bouncing sluggishly into the air after each impact, racing on with the fury of the wind as she settled to strike down again. A country telephone line with two wires disputed passage until the basket went through it without the slightest jar. And then Don shouted, genuine alarm now in his voice for the first time in the flight. An upflung arm waved into the growing dusk ahead.

"Power line, Ewart! Here's where we burn!"

Ewart looked. He didn't have to strain his eyes to see the tall gray metal towers, the four thin, deadly strands sagging in between. He thought of leaping from the basket to the ground, to lighten the load so that the balloon would clear this almost certain quick disaster. But they were making too much speed, and there was no means of stopping now, for they had thrown away their drag rope with its anchor—a provision for an emergency such as this.

The wind now held them steadily to a velocity of nothing less than fifty miles an hour, with gusts sweeping them to sixty. Statically heavy, they could not rise, except on each rebound from the earth. Each time the basket struck its speed was slowed; each time they rocketed, the wind clutched the great bag in its grasp and carried it. The wires would strike midway between the basket and the bottom of the balloon itself.

"Hold on!" Don cried. "Don't let it

get you when they break!"

"Be ready to jump out if it fires up. Thank God we tied that appendix closed—no air mixed with the hydrogen—probably won't explode—just burn."

They hit the wires. They went through the wires like a barracuda through a net, so rapidly that each wire snapped before it had been stretched to touch another one. There was no flash of fire, no burning flame.

Don Maris' luck again!

"Close," Ewart said, and he was pale. "Look out—what's this ahead?"

The basket slapped the ground a hundred feet from a huge barn, bounded over it at dizzy speed. And there, ahead, lay a sixteen wire telegraph line beside a railroad. They hit the wires, crushed against them solidly. But here the basket met with more resistance than the wind could overcome. Ten wires snapped, pinging and snarling as they writhed back from the impact; but six held. The basket slid along these remaining ones, until it struck a pole; and it is a matter of record here that that pole came out by the roots, and all remaining wires with it!

In a maze of twisted tentacles of steel, the crossarm of that pole was held fast to the basket. The balloon, now, couldn't rise; but it dragged that pole a hundred yards, across a road and to a clump of trees. And thus, at last and finally, to a stop, while the wind whipped through the rigging and the bag thrashed to get away.

"Welcome home!" Don said weakly, hanging to a stay. "I've had enough. More than enough. Let's get down from here—and stay."

Ewart laughed. It was more of a cackle than a laugh. He, too, had a stay firmly in each hand—to keep from trembling visibly.

"We didn't make any money, Don, but we had a real thrill."

"Enough," said Don, "to last me for a lifetime. Say, it's going to be something of a problem to climb down that pole, if you ask me."

Ewart was working with the wires that held the crossarm to the basket. Presently he got it loose. Don, just then, exclaimed:

"Water, Ewart, we've got a thousand pounds of rain inside this basket. No wonder we threw away all that ballast. I was to excited to feel how wet my feet and ankles were. We don't have to quit—we've plenty of ballast to last all night."

They did have. The rubber basket lining held water halfway to their knees. Ewart loosed the basket from the pole, shoved away on it and fell. The basket settled into the top of a small tree and began to drag with the wind again.

"Give me your knife," Don said. "I'll fix this thing so we can fly again."

HE TOOK the knife and, in one corner of the basket, just above the waterline, cut a small hole. Then both men moved to that corner, stood there with the basket tilted by their weight, while the water trickled out. In ten minutes the weight had been lessened until the balloon began to rise, and then they stepped into the other corner so that the basket returned to level position and no more water could escape.

"Not so bad," Ewart declared. "And the wind's still strong. We'll make miles per hour while it lasts. It's about stopped raining, too."

But while this ingenious use of water for their ballast put them in the race again, they looked forward to a night of misery. Their clothes were soaked, and those they wore were the only garments they had with them. The food was gone some remnants of it still floating in the water in the basket.

"Want to go on, or call it off?" Ewart asked. "The babes in the wood won't have anything on us after it gets dark and we go up where it's cold."

Don shivered.

"Go on! Wonder where the others got to?"

The *Hortense* had climbed to five hundred feet. The wind was still strong, was rushing them along at forty miles an hour. They traveled with the storm, which, having expended itself of lightning and most of its rain, was no longer dangerous.

"Where are we?" Ewart asked. He fumbled at a map case, drew forth a handful of wet and soggy maps. "These are almost a total loss."

But they finally located themselves about seventy miles east and north of Pittsburgh. They had been in the air slightly less than two hours.

"If we don't get the record for distance," Don declared, "we'll get the record for speed. Well, we've earned it, I'm here to tell."

They saw no other balloons either ahead or behind, but this caused them no concern, for they knew a storm, of the intensity of the one they had just passed through, would scatter the contestants and put a number of them out of the flight entirely. Staying in the strongest wind was now their problem, for they realized that the storm was, while large, of a local nature. If they drifted from the main wind current, the storm might pass them by and leave the balloon becalmed.

At Ewart's suggestion they removed their clothing piece by piece, wrung it out as effectively as possible by hand, and put it on again. This was, at best, a poor substitute for something dry to wear, but it was the best available. Their bodies warmed the garments after a time, but occasionally both men gasped in the sudden shock of chill when their flesh came in contact with an hitherto unwarmed portion of the cloth.

"This isn't going to be any joke," Don said. "Before tonight is through, we're going to be lucky if we both don't have pneumonia and congested chills—whatever that is. I didn't know damp cloth could get so cold."

Ewart held up a dripping foot.

"If only we didn't have to carry this water in the basket with us," he complained. "I never could stand wet feet."

They passed rapidly across a vista of undulating hills, wooded ridges and cultivated valleys. The balloon was gradually swinging away from the center of the storm and losing speed. At 7:15 they were making only eighteen miles an hour, and that grew less and less until they were, at last, almost standing still.

"Be dark in thirty minutes," Ewart predicted. "I'd like to find a good wind and get settled for the night. A good wind and an all-night ride would win this race, you know it?"

"Ought to. B-boy, I'm cold!" Don grinned. "I hope we don't spend the night right here."

But they had not long to wait. Thunder rumbled suddenly ahead, and lightning illuminated the clouds. The balloon, flying now just below a thousand feet, drifted from under the main overcast of the storm just passed, crossed a patch of clear sky and the two men saw, in a second lightning flash, the towering cumulus of another storm.

They studied this in speculation. Neither wished to abandon the flight, in spite of the misery of wet clothes and the cold; but they had seen what violence a thunderhead contained, and they were cautious. This seemed, however, a smaller storm. The lightning was not steady, the rain evidently not violent; the cumulus, cream-puff top not as high as it had been in the storm just passed.

"What do you think?" Don asked. "There's another ride waiting for us inside that baby."

"And also wind," Ewart predicted. "But what we're after is distance—lots of quick distance. That's what we're up here for. Grab a handful of hemp and let's go."

The *Hortense* approached the storm at a slow, steady pace, riding near a thousand feet and oscillating up and down only now and then. It struck the first mild rush of wind and picked up speed. It rode for ten minutes at this constant pace before the basket shuddered from a down-thrust and then went wildly upward.

"Small, but wicked," Don declared, referring to the size and intensity of the thunderhead.

"If there aren't any high lines in our path we'll go places," Ewart said.

The rain, suddenly, was driving down in torrents, streaming off the rounded sides of the big bag and pouring into the basket. Both men moved over until their weight caused water to run from the hole Don had cut through the rubber lining; but it became apparent soon that this would not suffice.

"Your knife!" Don shouted, above the thunder in their ears. "I'm going to open up this hole."

He cut a jagged gash, through which the water poured. Standing so that the basket was level, they found that this leak kept pace with the rain that ran inside, and yet they retained enough water on the floor below the hole to use as ballast.

The *Hortense* had gone up to five thousand feet into the swirling clouds before it struck the down current on the other side of the storm's center. When this happened, the two men tilted the basket again and let almost all the water out, to stop the fall. This slowed their descent, but did not stop it. They came down at five hundred feet a minute, the *Hortense* actually rising in relation to the air, but the current bearing her irresistibly on down.

THE lightning had increased to vivid flashes that rolled thunder through the mist. Don was watching his instruments; Ewart stood studying the formation of the storm.

"We may have—"

Crash!

Ewart was down, crumpled to the basket floor. Don Maris stood stunned, his legs and arms paralyzed. He fell heavily on Ewart.

Zit-zit! Crash!

The reek of ozone filled the air. A wisp of smoke trailed down into the basket—the stench of burning rubber was in Don Maris' nostrils. As though in a dream, he heard the dull warning of the flames.

Don thought of his parachute, but he could not move. His brain centers were blunt and unresponsive, like a fighter's down for the count; he could still think but could not act. He managed, after seconds, to move his arms, and raised himself enough to put his index finger at Ewart's throat to feel the pulse. And there he felt a faint beat.

All thought of jumping left his mind. He concentrated on what to do, for he knew the balloon might explode at any instant and kill them both. Yet he was not consciously afraid. Fear seemed a remote and distant thing just then—a thing to be afraid of when the fire got to him. There would then be time enough to let fear possess his feelings.

He dragged himself to his knees as life came back slowly to his legs. A plan was revolving in his mind—he would, he thought, throw Ewart from the basket, tripping the parachute; then jump himself. That would be the quickest, safest way. It would get them both out of reach of fire. The flames were louder now, the smoke thicker.

Don looked hastily at the rate-of-climb indicator in the basket. They were going down too fast to land. He struggled to his wobbly legs, reached down to pick Ewart up and throw him overboard. But he was weak. His muscles were not normal. He couldn't lift Ewart from the floor.

He looked down, trying to see the earth. The rain had stopped, the dusk had gathered until fields and woods lay all in mottled shadows. Lights of a town winked up through the trees. Lightning flickered and flashed in the clouds above, and a lone bolt streaked to the ground a mile away.

These things were recorded in Don's mind subconsciously. He had no more than twenty seconds in which to act. He could not lift Ewart's massive form, and he knew that he would die if he remained with the balloon. Why die? It was so easy to get out himself. The thought tugged at him. Impulsively he crawled up on the basket edge. But he didn't jump.

He changed his mind, turned back to Ewart on the floor and tried again to lift him—futilely. He looked down, trying to see where the burning balloon would land, with its hurtling descent and the wind that drove it on.

The *Hortense,* he saw suddenly, had almost stopped its descent at five hundred feet, according to the instruments. It had been light, was rising in a fast descending current; and now the current had abandoned it. It started up again.

Don's one hope of landing safely was that the balloon would settle slowly enough so that impact with the ground would not kill both men. Any delay would allow the fire to get to the hydrogen and defeat that hope. The balloon was now beginning to rise again. And Don could not valve gas because of the certainty of an explosion if he did.

The fire, the main hazard, solved the problem, however. It burned through the envelop and touched the hydrogen. Yet there was no great explosion. At the beginning of the flight, the appendix—the outlet at the bottom of the bag—had been tied shut, and no air mixed with the gas. Pure, it burned, while the fabric at the bottom was sucked up into the netting.

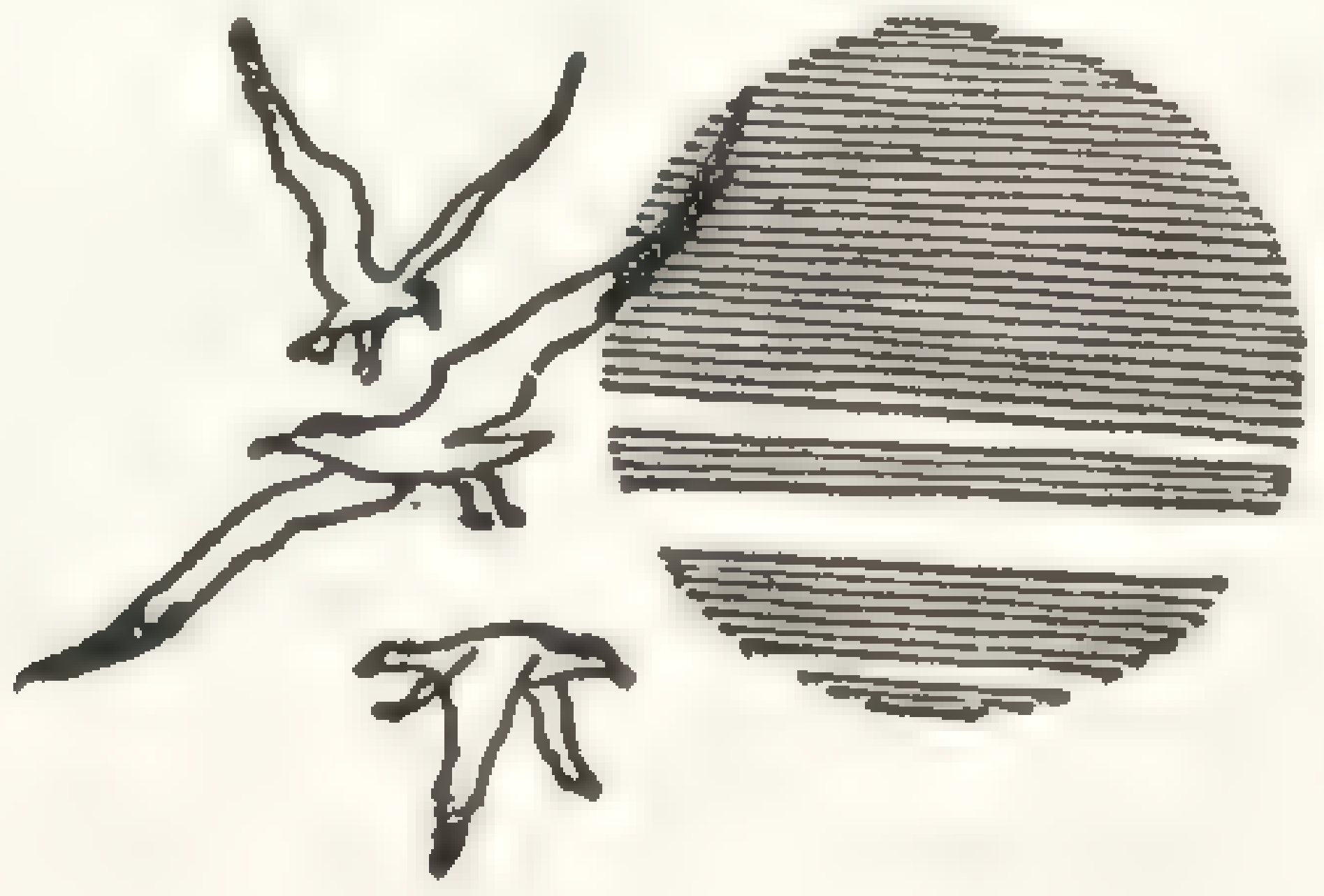
Thus, for a brief time, the balloon had a tendency to parachute to earth. The netting cover of the envelop did not, fortunately for Don, burn through and release the spread of fabric.

Thus they fell rapidly again, like a torch from the skies, and struck violently on the edge of a small river. The basket struck, slithered down and landed in the water. The burning net and fabric, flung by the small remaining wind, fell clear and, lying on the stream's embankment high above, consumed itself in withering flames.

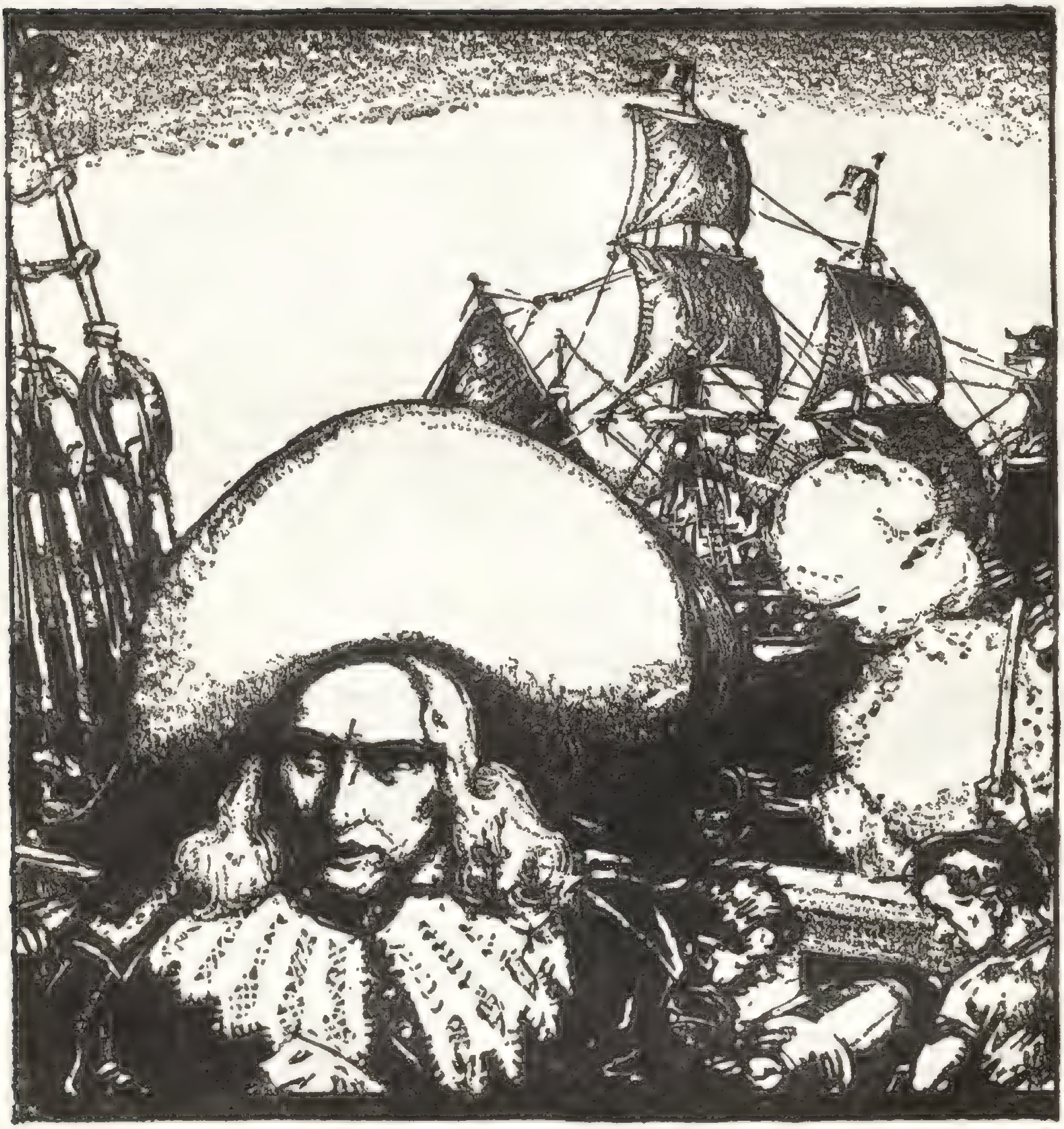
Don somehow dragged Ewart to dry ground, worked frantically over him in useless efforts at resuscitation. He was thus engaged, himself almost exhausted, when rescuers arrived, bringing a doctor from a nearby town.

Don Maris' luck! It saved them from many hazards, but it could not save Ewart Adams in the end. It may have been this luck, or the more perverse fortune of other men, that forced every other balloon from the race within fifty miles of Pittsburgh on that fateful evening. It may have been Don's luck that made him, entirely unwittingly, the winner, and therefore holder of the place for the more important contest in the Fall.

But all that seemed to Don small recompense. And later, when decorated for a deed he says any man would do, he placed the Medal of Honor in his safe, inside the last letter he ever got from Ewart Adams, who was his closest friend.



A Novelette of



UPON the restless Caribbean was fallen a flat calm. The sea heaved slowly, monotonously, sullenly, like bluish molten glass under the white-hot sun of noon. Away in the north, like a purple cloud breaking the horizon, showed the mountaintops of Hispaniola. Not a breath of wind stirred. Not a catspaw ruffled the smooth, fiery blue water.

Yet, across that molten surface, a ship was moving, and moving rapidly. A strange sight, in this Year of Grace 1693, and in these waters. For she was, all too obviously, a galley of the Barbary rovers, and a double bank of oars drove her with a bone in her teeth. Drove her toward the helpless thing awaiting her, drove her relentlessly upon her prey. Nine guns to a side she showed, long Spanish culverins of glittering brass. And presently they began to speak,

the Sea Rovers

SIR BUCCANEER

By H. BEDFORD-JONES

vomiting forth powder smoke that clung heavily to the water.

A stout ship was the Dutchman, stout and massive, with a score and more of heavy guns—but helpless for lack of wind. Smack under her stern lay the galley, and drove the heavy shot into her until her barred flag fluttered down.

Now, as it so happened, there were two other sail lying idle upon those waters. One, to the south, was the forty-gun frigate *Jacobus,* taken from the Spaniards by O'Brien, and in command of his very good friend Vicomte de St. Rocher; who, with his buccaneers, fired a gun of congratulation as they saw the Dutchman strike to O'Brien. And off to the northwest, where she had been following the Dutchman like a sullen hound until becalmed, lay a small brig—so small as to get scant notice from any, buccaneer or Dutch.

O'Brien boarded his prize. He was a slim, straight man, his bleached yellowish hair framing a thinly aquiline face, his blue eyes very level and unafraid and merry. Lace fell at wrists and throat, his blue suit of Genoa velvet was spotless, and the sun glinted from his diamond buckles as he bowed gravely to the men and women assembled on the quarterdeck.

"You are no Moor, sir!" said the Dutch captain, staring at him.

"The saints forbid!" exclaimed O'Brien, and laughed a little. "Tell your men to throw down their arms. No harm or insult comes to any of ye here, unless I desire prisoners. Your ship's lading is mine. Your private goods are your own. Your ship is mine as well, if I want her."

"And who may you be, sirrah?" said an angry man, stepping out and speaking in English.

O'Brien eyed him.

"I am Colonel James O'Brien, my good fellow. And you?"

"Sir Archibald Murray, newly appointed vice-governor of Jamaica, with express orders to hang all pestilent buccaneers, and chiefest among them one Colonel O'Brien. And how does that suit you?"

O'Brien looked at the hard eyed, thin lipped Murray and, seeing that the man feared him not, laughed in frank delight. He strode up to the other and clapped him on the shoulder.

"Aye, here's a dour Scot for ye! Come you and the master down below for a talk over a glass of wine." He turned, with an order to his men, who were by now swarming aboard. "Ho, lads! No private goods looted, no man to be harmed. Denis O'Neill, come aft with me and see to the lading and manifests. Ten men take charge of the quarterdeck and harm no one."

So they went down to the cabin, where O'Brien looked at the manifests and saw that his prize held little he desired, except for the minted dollars in the lazaret and certain shipments of arms below. Ordering O'Neill to break these out and leave the rest, he reached for his wine cup and lifted it.

"King James!" he exclaimed, and drank. "What, Murray? Ye'll not toast a Stuart?"

"Aye, the Stuart who sits in Whitehall," said Murray grimly. "Well, I've told ye what you'd ha' found out for yourself, so what about it?"

"I suppose you think I'll hang you, since your chief commission is to hang me?" O'Brien smiled whimsically. "Why so intent upon it, sir?"

The Dutch captain leaned forward and spoke earnestly, in broken French.

"It is his family, *M'sieu le Capitaine*. They are aboard, the lady and daughters, and he is a brave man."

O'Brien nodded and held out his hand to Murray with the warm friendliness that so lifted him into men's hearts.

"For this time there's truce between us, eh?" he said. "You'll go your ways and hang me if you can. I'll go mine and hang you next time we catch you. Agreed?"

"You mean it? Then with all my heart," said the Scot promptly. "What sort of buccaneer are you, O'Brien? You're not what we've heard, that's plain enough."

O'Brien shrugged.

"You'll find out, if our paths cross again. Today I'm bartering your lives and personal property for news from Europe. I've been on the Barbary coast and the Main for a long while. There's still war?"

"There always will be, aye," said Murray, gloom in his dour, sharp visage. "The Empire, England, Spain, Holland, all leagued against France—and damme if I can see aught in it for any one!"

When he had questioned them further, O'Brien lighted a pipe that the skipper furnished and nodded to the Scot.

"You have letters? Hand them over. I'll read and return them—aye, no matter how they speak of the pestilent buccaneer! Upon my honor, Murray."

It was a singular scene. Murray and the Dutch captain, finding their people unhurt or unmolested by the buccaneers, who were chiefly French and Jacobites, both English and Irish, watched O'Brien in no little amazement as he read their letters and handed them back. Time passed. Presently O'Neill appeared with a word to O'Brien.

"Everything's out of her we want, Cap'n. But that brig is coming up, fetching a wind."

O'Brien hastened on deck. He had learned, among other things, that the Dutchman had been part of a convoy bound for the West Indies, had been blown south and separated from the fleet, and his first thought was that the brig had come from the convoy also. She was approaching slowly, bringing a very light air with her.

"A filibustering rascal," said the Dutch captain. O'Brien shrugged.

"No danger from her."

"No danger?" repeated the other. "Wait till you see her vomit men and you'll change your mind! I'd sooner meet five hundred Spaniards than fifty buccaneers. Ye'll not hand us over to them, m'sieu?"

"Not I," said O'Brien, with a glance at the women clustered aft. "I'll detain her till you catch the breeze. After that, fight your own battle—you're well able. Make the Windward Passage and bear up for Jamaica. *Adios!*"

So he departed, and as he waved to them from the deck of the galley the women gave him a fluttering cheer and the Dutchmen swelled it to a roar of farewell.

O'Brien cast a glance to the southward where St. Rocher lingered helplessly, and headed his galley for the approaching brig.

MEN were wetting down the topsails of the brig to catch the light air when O'Brien ran alongside after an exchange of hails. She carried close to three hundred men, as the Dutch master had predicted, but had only four small guns, being "found" for the Guadeloupe filibusters by M. de Choiseul of Basse Terre. They had yet to make an initial capture.

Their two leaders came aboard the galley, and O'Brien stood off for a little. The actual captain of the brig was one Chevalier de Beauchene—a huge, swarthy, violent man of Canadian origin, with a very thin veneer of gentility. Associated with him was one Morpain, an older man of considerable repute, small and restrained in speech, with a shrewd eye.

The two were filled with curiosity regarding the galley, and followed O'Brien down to the main cabin where a noonday meal was being set forth. They were amazed and a little awed by the profusion of white linen and silver dishes, by the deference of the servitors, and by the comfort and cleanliness of everything in sight. O'Brien, who had observed the wild savagery of the crowd aboard the brig, redoubled his politeness.

"*Ma foi, m'sieu,*" exclaimed the chevalier, "you live more like a king here than a democratic buccaneer!"

"No," said O'Brien. "I am a gentleman and live like one. Devil take all democrats!"

"Ah!" said Morpain. "I have it now. You are the O'Brien who killed Vernier and took his ship. I remember some of his men telling about it. Beauchene is just back from the south seas and Peru, with great tales of that coast."

Beauchene had tales, sure enough. He had been raiding New Spain with Watkins and the English buccaneers, and mouthed a story of massacre, obscenity and plunder. In the midst of his narrative he started up and went to the stern window.

"Hold! We must be after that Dutchman," he exclaimed. "The breeze is coming up. You are with us, m'sieu?"

"Not at all," said O'Brien coolly. "The Dutchman, as you observed, was boarded by me, and is now going his way under my safe-conduct. He's not worth your while."

"His ship is," said Morpain. "Come, M. O'Brien! You're not in earnest?"

O'Brien looked at the pair of them, with his thin smile.

"I gave you no safe-conduct aboard here, gentlemen," he said significantly.

There was a moment of silence, then Morpain spoke in his low voice.

"Oh, I catch your drift, O'Brien! You prefer to have us join you against that Spaniard to the south, eh? What do you say, Chevalier?"

Beauchene shrugged.

"Fair enough, by all means. Between us, we can handle her."

"Will you send a hail aboard your brig, then?" said O'Brien, chuckling.

The chevalier stamped to the deck, roared an order at his men, and the two craft headed toward the frigate, the galley slowly rowing along with the brig. O'Brien glanced out the stern window, saw the Dutchman catching the breeze and bearing away, and smiled to himself.

"You have a fine craft here," said Beauchene, "and well able to cope with the Spanish galleys along the coast; useful, too, in a calm. But what the devil! You'd never get free buccaneers to turn themselves into galley slaves."

"Proving the advantage of my discipline over your democracy," said O'Brien. "Well? Why are you two exchanging looks?"

Morpain laughed and nodded to the other, who spoke.

"Look you, m'sieu! We've caught drift of something worthwhile, but too hard for our teeth. A fisherman told us this morning that inside Saona Isle, up yonder at the tip of Hispaniola, there are two craft moored. They left San Domingo three days ago, but ran foul of one another in the night and put in under shelter of the isle to repair. They'll be there for a day or two. One is an English fifty-four, probably the *Yarmouth;* we heard she was newly come out to the Jamaica station, and has been cruising off Hispaniola. The other is our meat. She's a Panama galleon, blown away from the Plate Fleet during that storm of two weeks since, and put into San Domingo. No doubt the *Yarmouth* is convoying her on her way, or until they meet with some other ship to give her company to Cadiz. With this galley and our brig—are you game for the venture?"

O'Brien reflected. His own two craft were richly enough laden, for off Caracas he had picked up a Portuguese carrack fresh from the Indies. None the less, thought of a Panama galleon was arresting in its possibilities.

"You're mad," he answered slowly, puffing at his long pipe. "The *Yarmouth* would blow us both out of the water!"

"What about the Spaniard yonder?" said Beauchene eagerly. "We'll take her, and then bear up for Saona Isle. All we want is to lay alongside that galleon."

"Say you so?" responded O'Brien.

"Aye! And we must be closing with the Spaniard by this time. What say you?"

"Let's on deck, gentlemen."

The three came out on the quarterdeck of the galley, whose oars had been put up by this time, and her two lateen sails dropped to catch the freshening breeze. She had drawn well ahead of the brig and was holding straight for the frigate, now not a mile distant. Morpain caught the arm of O'Brien.

"Hold! Wait for our brig—tackle her together! She can't get away from us."

O'Brien turned to him, laughing a little.

"You mean your brig can't get away from her! Ho, there, O'Neill! Signal M. de St. Rocher to heave to and lower away a boat and come aboard."

The two buccaneers stood thunderstruck as they perceived the exchange of signals, and realized that this frigate was no prize for the taking, but in company with O'Brien. A new and splendid ship of forty guns, taken almost without a shot and little damaged, she made with the *Black Rose,* as the galley was named, a pair of fighting craft that might well go raiding down the mainland coast and singeing the beard of Spain, as O'Brien dreamed to do.

"If you mean to nip our brig," said Beauchene sullenly, "you'll get naught but hard knocks, I warn you."

O'Brien clapped him on his hulking shoulders.

"Here comes St. Rocher, and if he says the word we'll nip the galleon—but on my own terms, mind you. So chew on that awhile, my fighting cocks! My terms."

St. Rocher, tall and dark and saturnine, was coming in a boat that danced across the freshening seas. The brig luffed uncertainly, but Beauchene waved her on and then fell into talk with the old filibuster by the rail.

When St. Rocher came over the rail O'Brien welcomed him eagerly.

"Swing in your boat and come along, Vicomte. Tell you later about the Dutchman. Here's something else again. Chevalier!"

St. Rocher was presented, and the four of them returned to the cabin, where O'Brien set the tale of the galleon before his companion.

"There's the lay of it," he concluded, "and I'll leave the answer to you, for the *Jacobus* is your own ship, my friend. If you'd not risk her, small blame to you."

"What's worth having is worth risking," and St. Rocher showed his white teeth in his reckless smile. "I say yes!"

O'Brien turned to the two filibusters.

"Agreed, gentlemen. Now listen to my terms. I'm to be in command; you're to lead your men under my orders, whether ye like 'em or not. And when it comes to looting the galleon, I'm to have first say as to my share o' the spoil, whether it be half the proceeds or what-not; I'll ask no more than half, mayhap not that much. Last, there's to be no killing except in fight, no ransoming of prisoners without my consent; and as there may be women aboard the galleon, I'll say now that they're not to be touched."

Beauchene leaped to his feet angrily.

"Death of my life!" he roared, passion swelling in his eyes. "Impossible! It's filibuster law that everything be sold at the mainmast. As for the ship, she must be taken into Basse Terre and sold, for the Admiralty gets a tenth part. I'll have none of your terms!"

O'Brien gestured ironic assent.

"Very well. Then go your ways—and we'll take the galleon without you."

The shrewder Morpain intervened and argued his companion into compliance. There was, in fact, nothing to do but accept the terms laid down, or else be left out of it; so that presently they were going aboard the brig to put the matter to the vote of their men. At the rail, awaiting the agreed signal from them, O'Brien told St. Rocher about the loot of the Dutchman and what happened aboard her.

"If you agree," he went on, "it's in my mind to leave the galley standing off and on, and walk in on the galleon with the frigate and brig. We'll be proud Spaniards and can fool these British well enough. We need not visit the galleon until we're ready to take her. There's a good breeze coming up and we should reach the isle before dark."

"Agreed," said St. Rocher simply. "There's the signal."

The galley swung in close to the brig, into whose chains leaped Beauchene.

"Are ye meaning to go straight in and board them?" he demanded.

"Not unless I have to," rejoined O'Brien, while the savage, unkempt men aboard the other craft eyed him in wonder. They were little better than wild beasts of the sea, those men, and looked the part. "I'll take the frigate in. You follow, with only a dozen men showing on deck. I'll say you're a prize. They'll take us for Spaniards. During the night we'll walk off with the galleon. Understand?"

The buccaneers yelled wild approval, for this sort of strategy was new to them. They had no equals at seamanship, and once aboard an enemy their wild ferocity bore down all opposition; but all their tactics consisted in a straight and savage combat.

So it was settled, and all three craft trimmed sail for Saona Isle, to the northeast. When they raised the land, most of O'Brien's hundred men were shifted aboard the frigate, leaving only enough to work the galley, and the *Jacobus*, to all appearance a stately Spanish ship, hoisted the white banner with the arms of Spain, and held in for the isle and the cape behind. But little did O'Brien dream of what destiny there lay in wait to snare him.

* * *

JUST inside the long Saona Isle, whose trees cut off any view of the sea, the *Yarmouth* lay anchored, her men spending most of their time ranging the sandy shore or hunting wild cattle along the edge of the savanna. The *Santa Maria,* a glorious but unwieldy creature all scarlet and gold and blue, towered above her.

Bluff Captain Killgrew, a nephew of the admiral of that name, was on courteous but not too intimate terms with the Spaniards, whom he distrusted as allies and disdained as seamen. Here he was right enough. The sailing master of the *Santa Maria* had died en route from Panama, and her titular captain, the Conde de San Lucar, was a very gallant soldier but a very poor ship's master. However, with help from the *Yarmouth* he managed to get his smashed rudder post repaired and his riven bowsprit spliced.

"Sink me," said Killigrew to his officers, "if I can see how the Dons could smash up both ends of a ship at once! And never hurt us by so much as a scratch."

O'Brien did not walk in upon his prey by any means, for Killigrew had men on watch and came out stripped for action to meet him; but with the Spanish frigate had come the allied signals, so the courteous guns of salute rolled, and Killigrew put back into the shelter of the island with the *Jacobus* following and the little brig trailing her. There was no lack of Spanish garments aboard the frigate, and presently O'Brien lowered the barge and was rowed over to the *Yarmouth* to dine with Killigrew, his men hailing the galleon in right good Spanish as they passed.

Twenty-four men in the world had the right to wear the collar of the Toison d'Or, and O'Brien was not one of them; but he wore the Fleece none the less, the golden drop on its pink ribbon standing out against his slashed black velvet. This, too, had come to him with the frigate from the Duke de Torres. Daylight was still lingering when he passed aboard the *Yarmouth,* sending back his boat lest unwittingly the men betray the imposture.

He bowed low to Killigrew and the gathered officers, and spoke in English.

"Gentlemen, it gives me great pleasure to meet with you. I learned at San Domingo that you were here, for fishermen had brought in word, and I came in order to relieve you of the galleon yonder," and he smiled cheerfully as he said this.

"Sink me!" exclaimed Killigrew. "You speak English well, Señor Don!"

"Was I not a captive in your charming country for two years?" said O'Brien. "But I forget. I am the Duke de Torres, and yonder is a rascally filibustering brig which I took on the way hither today."

Killigrew introduced himself and his officers, and O'Brien was escorted below to where the punchbowl was brewing and dinner presently to be served. Within the space of a drink or two O'Brien was a prime favorite with all present—accounted for, he said, by his Irish blood. Not a few nobles of Spain but could boast it.

"Aye, he's right," spoke up the jolly chaplain. "D'ye mind, Captain Killigrew, the great lady aboard the galleon, who speaks English? Ye should have invited her and the count over, sink me if ye shouldn't!"

"Not to mention the two señoritas!" said another. Killigrew grew red in the face.

"Damme, gentlemen! I'll thank you to know that I'm aware of whom I want here, and no rascally Spaniard—oh, devil take it! Your pardon, Señor Don—"

O'Brien broke into hearty laughter and slapped Killigrew on the back.

"Faith, here's to the king, gentlemen! Whether he be your king or my king, it's all one among friends. Who's the lady ye mention aboard the galleon?"

"Sink me to hell if I can think of her name," said the blunt captain. "Her husband was some big noble in New Spain—a viceroy, didn't they say? Anyhow, he's dead, and she's a rare one. None of your affected court beauties, and not a day over thirty-five. She's from some great Irish family—what's the name of it, Dillon? You know all those barbaric names."

"O'Donnell," said the laughing lieutenant. "She's from the O'Donnells. And, gentlemen, that's the same in Ireland as the Plantagenets in England, no less!"

"True for you!" exclaimed O'Brien. "Only better, praise be. Your health, gentlemen! I've been at wars too long to have much courtly polish left, so I don't mind saying it's lucky I'm aboard here, rather than the galleon yonder."

"Luckier than you know," said Killigrew with a wry face. "This Count of San Lucar is a great gentleman and all that, but a cursed poor sailor and devilish bad company. He's not a friend of yours, maybe? No offense intended."

"Never heard of him before," said O'Brien truthfully. "I'm fresh from the Canaries and have never seen New Spain. Have you had any news of the pirate O'Brien?"

"He's not been heard of for months," returned Killigrew, "but when he turns up he'll be hanged. Every ship on the station is watching out for him; the coastguard galleys as well. A special vice-governor is coming out, I've heard, to hunt down O'Brien and get rid of him."

O'Brien lifted his glass.

"All luck to him, then!"

"To whom—O'Brien or the vice-governor?" spoke up Dillon with a laugh. The blue eyes of O'Brien twinkled merrily at him.

"Ye'll know before morning, I hope. What's this—dinner? An honest roast-beef dinner; so you've been killing wild cattle ashore, eh? Bucan some of it over a woodfire, then you'll be a buccaneer and on even terms with O'Brien if you meet him—"

So they drank and jested, and one and all vowed that this Spanish nobleman was the most gallant gentleman they had ever known. After dinner came a boat from St. Rocher with a great hamper of Spanish wines out of the frigate, and all must needs sample them, and after that was the usual Saturday night punch of navy custom, for the morrow was Sunday. What with one thing and another, most of the gentlemen were under the table when O'Brien took his leave toward midnight.

He seemed sober enough, however, and they remembered afterward that he paused at the gangway and asked when came the turn of the tide here.

"The next ebb, your Worship," answered the sailing master, "will come at two in the morning. And your ship has swung in upon us, master."

"She'll be far from you with morning," said O'Brien, and went down to his boat.

It was not by chance, however, that the *Jacobus* had swung in upon her hawser, so that she lay squarely athwart the bow of the frigate, nor that a kedge had been put out astern to hold her there.

Across and in toward the mainland shore was moored the galleon, and close to her the brig had dropped anchor. St. Rocher had his orders, so O'Brien went directly aboard the brig, sending the boat after the dozen men from his own crew who were to join him. He found the hatches off and the decks aswarm with men sleeping under the stars. Chevalier de Beauchene met him as he came over the side.

"All well, m'sieu?"

"Perfect," said O'Brien cheerfully. "Two in the morning. We'll sleep until then. Have you picked out the men and assigned them to their places?"

"Everything arranged, *mon ami*."

"Then I'll stretch out on the deck for an hour. When my men come, let them join me."

As he lay there, looking up at the silent stars, with the snores of sleeping men from the decks and hold, there stole the tinkle of a lute from the high stern windows of the galleon close by. A voice came to him, a slow, faint voice singing Irish words of an old song his nurse had sung to him many a time in the far days of childhood; and it drifted again to him now so that he came to one elbow, incredulous, listening:

"The rose that you gave
Is withered and dead;
Yet even in death
It brings me a breath
Of the sweetness I crave—
Though its beauty be fled."

And suddenly, as the lute tinkled on, impulse seized O'Brien. He lifted his voice softly and carried the Irish words of the little song, as though there were no peril or watchers around, nor cursing buccaneers nor wondering Spaniards, but only some one yonder in the towering gilded poop of the galleon to hear his words:

"The love that you gave
Abides with me yet.
You have perished, men say;
What knowledge have they?
I know that the grave
Can not make you forget."

The lute ceased its tinkle. Somewhere a man laughed, another cursed. Beauchene came aft to where O'Brien lay and stopped beside him.

"Are you mad?" he demanded fiercely. "Your men are here."

"Mad? Of course," and O'Brien laughed. "All Irishmen are mad, my friend. Did my men bring my sword with them? Good. Send them along, and do you see that your sea wolves carry no pistols. Cold steel and naught else."

And presently, with his dozen men around him, he was sleeping, dreaming still of the voice that drifted across the water in ancient Irish words.

WERE this a tale of the galleon's taking only, much might be made of it; but there was destiny here, hidden behind Saona Isle, for a deal more was to come of the whole affair than was spelled in the tale of blood and loot.

From the moment he cast anchor, O'Brien's plan had been clear cut in every detail and of the utmost simplicity. It was carried out with a beautiful precision—thanks largely to the fact that St. Rocher had carefully laid every gun of the frigate's broadside.

At two in the morning, with the tide just on the ebb, the brig moved silently. A swimmer, unseen, had bent on a line to the hawser of the galleon, and she was almost alongside before a startled Spaniard realized the fact and hailed. Grappling irons were flung; a moment later men were swarming over the galleon's high side, spreading to their stations, cutting down all whom they encountered. Almost before the first alarm yells had died, the deck was theirs. The hatches were clapped on, the cables were slipped or hacked asunder, and scores of men were aloft, loosing the sails to catch the offshore breeze. Galleon and brig, grappled together, moved out on the ebb tide.

Behind them trumpets and drums waked wild echoes from the shores about, battle lanterns sprang alight, the *Yarmouth* shrilled to a boatswain's whistle. St. Rocher, aboard the *Jacobus*, gave the word, and slow-matches glimmered. Gun after gun vomited flame; crash upon crash re-echoed from the hapless king's ship. Down came the tophamper, bags of bullets cut the rigging to shreds, laying spars and canvas across the deck, cloaking guns and passage. She lay there crippled and helpless in the starlight, while the frigate went out in stately silence upon the tide, with none to follow.

And later, when he came into Kingston harbor, Captain Killigrew would compare notes with Sir Archibald Murray, and curse the very name of Colonel James O'Brien.

Dawn found Hispaniola a shadow to the northwest, the *Black Rose* galley two miles to starboard, St. Rocher in the van, and the galleon lumbering along with the brig grinding against her counter. O'Brien sent the men to the lines, and brought the great ship into the wind, and set about his work. He was on the poop with his own men, Beauchene and Morpain with him. The frantic hammerings on cabin doors and hatches had long since died away into silence.

Over three hundred Spaniards, soldiers and sailors, were battened below. When the way was cleared, they came up with pike and fusil and sword to meet swinging cutlasses; and when a dozen of them had tumbled below again no more poured up. Instead, came shouts, to which the buccaneers answered, and presently the Spaniards came up two by two, without arms, as ordered.

O'Brien went forward. When the first pair of Spaniards appeared a blood spattered Frenchman leaped, and one of the two fell with a split head. O'Brien's long rapier flickered in the gray light and drove through the buccaneer's throat. There was a growl and a yell, as the circle of savage men faced him.

"Disobedience is death," said O'Brien coolly. "Right or wrong, my lads?"

"Right!" yelled a voice, and the curses died away in wild disputing.

Thereafter his orders met with no protest, and the Spaniards came up unharmed and were sent into the brig. Long ere it was finished, the buccaneers were at their looting.

O'Brien came back to the lower poop,

and the door leading into the main cabin was unbarred. The sun was just rising over the eastern sea rim. Into the open doorway, blinking at them, came a Spaniard in half-armor, rapier in hand, a man whose jet beard and arrogant features, no less than his splendid attire, proclaimed his rank.

"What means this, dogs?" he exclaimed in French.

"It means what you will, señor," returned O'Brien in stately Castilian. "I am Colonel O'Brien, and your ship is mine. Hand over your sword, you and those men behind you. I offer you your lives and freedom within the hour."

"San Lucar does not surrender," said the other in proud scorn. Though he must have seen the numbers of the buccaneers now flooding hastily aft, and that his ship was utterly lost, it all mattered no whit to him. "Filibusters, eh? By the saints! Come, señores, cut down these dogs—"

"One moment!" snapped O'Brien. "Stop and think, fool! The ship's mine. If you have women to defend, they shall not be harmed, upon my honor—"

The only answer of San Lucar was to step forward and let drive with his rapier—a deadly soldier's blade which O'Brien barely caught with his own.

"All right, fool," said he, lunging in. "If you'll have it, then take it!"

Yell upon yell went up; not so easily was San Lucar brought down, for he had survived many a stricken field in New Spain, and knew his business. Twice his corselet saved him from O'Brien's point. The big galleon rolled and dipped suddenly, and San Lucar lost his balance. O'Brien drew back a pace.

"Your last chance, señor! I would not kill a brave man—"

With a snarling oath, the Spaniard's blade drove in. At the same instant, some one in the passage behind him fired a pistol, whose ball sang past the face of O'Brien. That was the last San Lucar saw of the bright sunlight, for he caught at his throat, and the blood gushed over his hands as he fell.

With that the giant Beauchene was rushing headlong into the passage, cutlass a-swing.

Men fell there and asked no quarter—Spanish officers of the ship and of the soldiers aboard. In the passage was hot work, savage work. Presently O'Brien came into the main cabin, and his dozen men choked the passage behind, as he had ordered them, so that the buccaneers could not follow.

Here, in the huge cabin with carved and gilded walls, Beauchene and Morpain, with a pair of their men, were joined by O'Brien. Facing them were two wounded officers, swords in hand, and behind them three stern eyed friars, unarmed. Crowded behind these, again, were half a dozen women.

Beauchene hurled himself at the two officers. One he cut down. The other wounded him, but fell to the back sweep of the crimsoned cutlass. A wild shriek burst from the women as Beauchene swung his weapon to strike down the foremost friar—and then one of those women had leaped out before the three friars, facing the savage buccaneer, a poniard in her hand.

"Stop!" she ordered, a ring of authority in her voice. "Are you a mad dog, not knowing whom you bite?"

Beauchene checked his blow and laughed wildly as he gazed upon her. O'Brien gazed too, but he did not laugh. Instead, a flame came into his heart, and his blue eyes leaped, and something sang in his pulses. He knew this was the woman who had sung in the night.

She was neither tall nor short, but held her head very high, and when one looked into her eyes it became clear that she had not been one of those who screamed, for there shone in them as it were the flash of a sword. About her head was bound red gold hair, though her brows were dark. Her face held an eagerness beyond words, that gave even the wild Beauchene pause. Then, with another laugh, he feinted—and struck the poniard from her hand and caught her by the wrist.

Just then the point of O'Brien's rapier touched his throat, so that he looked sidelong and met the blue eyes—and loosed his grasp.

"I am master here, not you," said O'Brien. "Step back."

Those blue eyes chilled the man's passion. He saw Morpain and his pair of rascals at one side, and he saw two of O'Brien's men with pistols ready, and he lowered his blade.

"God save all here!" said O'Brien in Irish, stepping past Beauchene, and then spoke in Spanish. "There is nothing to fear. Your lives are safe; you, padres, will escort these women into the boat alongside, where your men are waiting for you. All, that is, save this one woman."

He met the proud eyes of the woman before him, and then Beauchene uttered a wild oath.

"Aye, and what's this now? You said no woman molested—and if there's any to be glutted here, it's me and not you!"

For an instant longer O'Brien looked into the woman's eyes, then he turned and looked at Beauchene and stood laughing a little.

"Have you forgot our bargain, Chevalier?" he said mockingly. "I call Morpain yonder to witness it. First share of the spoil to me, not to exceed a full half. Aye, Morpain?"

"That is so, Cap'n," said Morpain, but his hand was at the knife in his belt.

"Then," said O'Brien, speaking now in Spanish that all might understand, "I claim this woman and all her possessions aboard this galleon, as my share; and with it, a full third of whatever treasure may be aboard, for my men. The rest is yours, Chevalier."

"Oh!" said Beauchene, with a grunt of surprise. He looked suspiciously at O'Brien. "No trick to this, is there?"

O'Brien bowed to him gravely.

"Upon my honor, none. This woman stays here, or rather, she comes aboard my ship, with all her belongings. The others go in safety aboard the brig, to sail whither they will; you'll put water and stores aboard her to last the crowd. You will sail this ship to Basse Terre with your men, and Captain Morpain yonder will be my agent to see that I am not cheated in the division of the spoil. You will so honor me, m'sieu?"

"With all my heart, monsieur," said the astonished Morpain, amazed and flattered that O'Brien should so trust him.

"Then let's be about it, and no more time wasted," said O'Brien, and sheathed his rapier. He turned to the passage and called in Irish, "Ho, there! To me, all O'Brien's men!"

They came crowding in, and he swept off his hat to the lady with the red hair.

"Give these men your orders," he said, and saw in her face that she understood the Irish words. "Let them make ready all your goods to go aboard my ship, for here you are among wild beasts. Do you understand me, daughter of the O'Donnells?"

"Surely you are the Red Earl come to life again!" she replied. "You have the face and the eyes of his portrait that was in my father's hall—good. I agree. Come with me, you men."

They went, for they were all Irish picked for their loyalty by O'Brien, and she led them into one of the cabins. Chevalier de Beauchene looked after her darkly.

"By my faith," he said, "I am not sure but that woman is worth more than a third of this ship's plunder!"

O'Brien laughed at this, and escorted the friars and women to the deck, with two or three officers who had been only wounded. The women cried out at him, and one of the stern friars demanded what would become of the marquesa.

"Suffice it to know she will not be harmed," said O'Brien, and had them put aboard the brig.

Marquesa, eh? Of the O'Donnell blood, too. He had heard often of the Flight of the Earls, seventy years ago—how O'Neill and O'Donnell had fled away out of Ireland to Spain, dying there or in Rome, and their houses perishing with them. And he was like Red Hugh's portrait, was he? Men had said that same thing ere this, how like he was to the Red Earl, the greatest Tyrone of them all. Some trend of O'Neill blood in him, perhaps. What matter now?

So, with a shrug, O'Brien had a signal made, and St. Rocher came in person with the boat for him, mounting on the galleon's deck and looking about. The brig had cast off and was heading northward again toward Hispaniola.

"I have sad news for you, old friend," said O'Brien, his eyes dancing. "I've claimed a third of the treasure aboard here, if there is any, for you and the men. For myself, I've claimed a woman."

"Yes, a likely tale," said St. Rocher with a careless laugh, and glanced aft. "You've been through the cabins? There'll be pearls from Panama and Caracas, beyond doubt—"

"Nay, I'm in earnest," broke in O'Brien. "We've plunder enough aboard our own craft to serve me. Morpain will act as our agent here, and I think honestly. But here she comes, and our men with her. We lost not a man in taking the craft, by the way, though I slew one of these savages. Madame, may I present my friend and comrade, Vicomte de St. Rocher? He'll take us aboard my own ship, where we may break our fast with more pleasure than here."

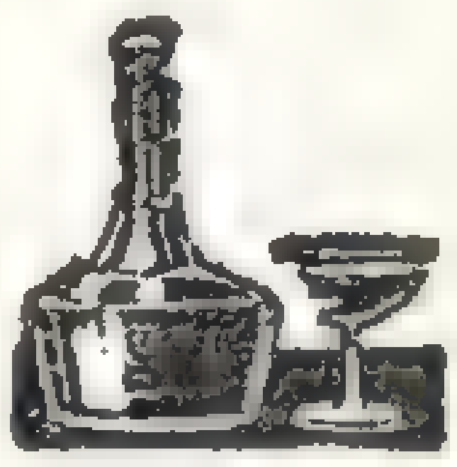
As he was speaking, the woman with the red-gold hair came from the after cabins toward them, followed by O'Brien's men carrying packages and trunks. A cloak was wrapped about her, but St. Rocher could only stare until he recollected himself, and bowed over the hand she extended to him. Then her violet eyes turned to O'Brien.

"They are pillaging in there," she said. "Should you not join them?"

"I have plundered all the world in finding you," said O'Brien. "May I hand you into the boat, or shall I carry you down the ladder? It is a long way down."

"Hell is farther," said she, with a silvery laugh. "I am able enough."

And refusing aid, she passed down the ladder herself, though it was no easy matter. St. Rocher looked at O'Brien and swallowed hard, then shrugged and followed in silence.



NO WORD was exchanged until they sat in the cabin of the *Black Rose,* though a smile touched the lips of the woman as she heard the galley's name. Wine and bread were set before them, and O'Brien saw that she looked very sharply at the man who bore it—an old man who had served in the Irish Brigade and in Flanders in times past.

"Wait," she said, as he was withdrawing, and she spoke in Irish. "Is your name Turlough, by any chance, once called Turlough of the Black Eyes?"

The man looked at her; his jaw fell and his hands shook a little.

"By the Rock of Doon!" said he, staring. "None has called me by that name in thirty years and more, since I was servant to the O'Donnell in Madrid!"

"Twenty years," said she, and laughed. "Twenty years ago you were my father's servant, Turlough of the Black Eyes—"

The old man fell on his knees to her, and tears leaped to his cheeks, and O'Brien had to put him out of the cabin by force. But she looked at him and at St. Rocher and smiled as she broke bread with them.

"Well?" she said. "I know you not, nor you me—"

"I heard a voice in the night across the water," said O'Brien quietly, "and had need to know no more. But I know you are a daughter of the O'Donnells, and that is enough."

"I have a Spanish name, and it is not badly regarded in Spain," she said, "but we will not mention it here. Once I was called Roisin, Little Rose; that's name enough. And when I saw you in that cabin, and you like the picture of the Red Earl, Hugh Ruadh, it was enough."

St. Rocher understood, for they spoke English. He reached out for a pipe from the rack and stuffed tobacco into it.

"I think both of you are stark mad," he said gravely.

"What right has this man to think?" said Roisin, regarding him.

"The right of my friend for many years, and my comrade," said O'Brien. At this, Roisin put out her hand to that of St. Rocher and smiled in her eager, lively manner.

"You should have said that in the first place, O'Brien—but I remember now, you did. The fault is my own."

St. Rocher blinked a little.

"But—what the devil?" he exclaimed, with a helpless gesture. "Why is she here, Jack? Let's be blunt about it; I must get back to the frigate. Are you taking her to Basse Terre?"

"That depends on her," said O'Brien. "Faith, I don't know."

"I think you do know," she said suddenly, and rose. "And if you don't, I do. I'll go out and speak with old Turlough and leave you to talk it over."

When the door shut behind her St. Rocher swore fervently.

"I don't know what to make of it," he said. "Look here! I know well enough you're no man for wenches; you never look twice at a woman. You seem to have gone mad; what's worse, she seems mad also. Are you bewitched!"

O'Brien held a coal to his pipe.

"St. Rocher, it's past explanation. I'd bid any other man to the devil; but I'll tell you the truth. That woman and I will go to the end of the world together. Don't get me amiss, my friend. It's no business of man and woman, of two sexes merely. Well ye know I had a wife once, and loved her, and lost her. This is something else again. Something bigger and deeper. There's an understanding between us, and no word spoken."

"Aye," said St. Rocher. "But I take it she's a great woman in Spain. She'll not be able to forget it and to be comrades with a buccaneer, if that's what ye mean. Devil fly away with me! She's too fine a woman to be dragged down. Ye must not let her be carried away—"

He frowned savagely at O'Brien, but the latter broke into a peal of laughter.

"Oh, man, man! Can ye not see that it's a joy to be in her hand. She's a comrade, aye. All her past life is broken and laid away like a cloth folded on a shelf."

"What?" said the other, glowering. "Will she wear boots and small clothes?"

O'Brien laughed till the tears came to his eyes, then sobered suddenly.

"She'll wear the heart's devotion of every man aboard here," he said gravely. "And she'll carry me to hell or heaven, and I her, and that's the whole of it."

St. Rocher nodded thoughtfully, laid down his pipe and rose.

"It's one of two things," he said. "Either you're raving mad, or else fate has come into your life. I'll think it over between here and Basse Terre. *Adios!*"

He saluted Roisin as he went to the ladder, and so was gone aboard his own ship, and the three vessels headed together toward Guadeloupe.

On sober reflection, O'Brien thought that he might be a little mad indeed, but as the days drew on he found otherwise, and became convinced that he was remarkably sane. Long before the peaks of Basse Terre broke the horizon, he had found his first impulses confirmed and strengthened into solidity. Between himself and this woman was friendship and something deeper, beyond words, which he could not explain or analyze. It was as though the same eager spirit lived in them both, and had united them.

As for the past, that was cleared away between them and then left for the dead to bury their dead. The Marquesa de Guimares had left a son in Spain, and a husband in New Spain, but it was the son whose memory chiefly lingered; here, as she said, was life to be begun anew, and happiness for the first time in twenty years, and freedom. And if there was any more than this in the hearts of either of them, it did not come to the surface or reveal itself.

O'Brien, in truth, had found something to live for, and the old gods were dead. If he had wanted gold, there was plenty of that aboard his two ships, and he cared nothing about the galleon's freight. While Roisin had gold and jewels to spare in her trunks, and great wealth in Spain if she wanted it. What was more to the point, he found her at one with him in his search, his questing beyond the horizon. She talked with him of Caracas and raids on the Brazilian coast beyond, and the keen thrill of adventuring drew them both—not what might be had from the venture. So, for the first time, Colonel James O'Brien found himself all aflame with what lay in the future.

So they came into Basse Terre, and let Beauchene lead the way in the galleon, with great saluting of guns and blazing of trumpets. Because of a certain relationship between the O'Donnells and the O'Briens, it was not amiss that the marquesa should be presented to the governor as O'Brien's cousin. She made it plain to all that, while she might accept a house ashore and the women slaves that were offered her, when O'Brien sailed again she would sail with him; and the officers and planters who looked into her eyes thought nothing strange in this, for Guadeloupe lived a merry, happy life wherein criticism of others played no part. Indeed, it was Madame de Choiseul herself, a relative of Pontchartrain, who took the marquesa under her wing.

NEXT day St. Rocher came aboard the galley and wakened O'Brien, who was sleeping after dancing and gambling at the governor's house till late in the night.

"Wake up and to business, Jack," he said. "I've been at work this morning. Owing to his connection with Pontchartrain, this M. de Choiseul is the real power in these parts. He's offered to get us letters of marque from the governor, which puts us safely inside the piracy pale. Yes or no?"

"Yes, of course," said O'Brien. "Turlough! Where the devil is my morning draft?"

"Here's the cup, so put it down," said St. Rocher. "Now, clear your head and listen. The island's full of filibusters, French and English, and all of them begging to come aboard us. Say the word, and we can take on a couple of hundred men, which will put the *Jacobus* on a fighting basis."

"Leave that to me," said O'Brien. "Faith, you have the energy of the devil this morning! Yes, I'll ship men, if they suit me. Why not? We need them. By the way, do you still think I'm a madman?"

St. Rocher shrugged in his saturnine fashion.

"My brain says you are. My heart says you're the luckiest man in this world, and here's my hand on it."

"Well said." And O'Brien gripped his hand.

Turlough knocked and came in.

"Your Honors, there's a man come aboard to speak with Captain St. Rocher."

"Send him in."

A little man clad in black entered and bowed low, and asked whether he were speaking with M. Philippe Jean Paul Asseline, Vicomte de St. Rocher.

"You are," said St. Rocher, laughing. "Though how you ferreted out my full name is more than I can see."

"Then, m'sieu, I beg to present the compliments of my master, M. Cassat, avocat, who lives at the third house up the street from the wine shop of the Laughing Nymphs. He requests that you call upon him at the first occasion befitting your convenience, upon a matter of most urgent importance."

"Eh?" St. Rocher stared at him. "What have I to do with an avocat? What's the business?"

The lawyer's clerk spread his hands in air.

"But, m'sieu, how should I know? I have a boat waiting, and if you would honor me with your company—"

"Very well," said St. Rocher, and at this O'Brien leaped out of bed.

"Wait a moment, and I'll go ashore with you. Better be getting some of those men signed up, or at least spread the word. What's all the noise on deck?"

St. Rocher chuckled.

"The hatches are off and our lading is going ashore, with merchants fighting to get it. You'd better keep your eye on that galleon, also, for those rascals are sending barges of loot ashore, I hear."

"To the devil with the galleon," said O'Brien, hurrying into his clothes.

He found the whole island in turmoil, indeed. What with the rich lading of three ships coming ashore, all sorts of fantastic tales about the galleon and her cargo of gold, and the sale of the galleon herself, according to filibustering rules, the harbor and town was filled with hurrying men and rushing boats and staring folk.

Applying himself to business, O'Brien did not see St. Rocher again until late in the afternoon, when he came back to the galley. He found that he could get a full crew for both craft without the least trouble, and spent a pleasant hour with Roisin and Madame de Choiseul. No sooner had he regained the *Black Rose* than St. Rocher hurriedly joined him from the frigate and waved aside all his questions.

"Come below, Jack. I have news for you."

Wondering at the unaccustomed gravity of his friend, O'Brien assented. Once in the cabin, St. Rocher closed the door.

"Jack, may I take this galley for a trip to Martinique?"

"Aye," said O'Brien. "It's yours as much as mine. What's up?"

St. Rocher exploded with laughter, caught him by the arms, hugged him with sudden exuberance.

"My faith, Jack! Over at Martinique everything's waiting for me—the governor there has documents, everything! You remember I've told you of that rascally old uncle of mine? He's gone, and look at me! The Marquis de Manneville, no less, lord of high and middle justice, of waters and forests, and the fairest lands in all Touraine! Fortune comes all at once, showers us with favor to repletion—"

O'Brien shouted his delight, called for wine, then bore St. Rocher ashore to celebrate in more fitting fashion. Yet, within himself he knew that St. Rocher was gone forever from his company.

With morning, St. Rocher took the emptied galley and departed, mustering a crew from ashore. O'Brien moved into the *Jacobus* with his own men, most of whom were engaged in wild carousal ashore; and, between shipping a full complement and getting the plunder ashore, was a busy man.

He remained busy during the following days, also. As his own business came to a close, he recollected the galleon, and set out to find Beauchene. In this he had small trouble, and found the chevalier and Morpain together, shortly after they had concluded the sale of the galleon. They greeted him none too warmly, but Morpain had been honest enough in the matter, and turned over bills of exchange to a staggering sum. Beauchene, who with his men had been made rich enough to buy half the island, put down the flagon of wine and looked hard at O'Brien.

"I am leaving tonight in a brig outfitting up the coast," he said. "I am taking her out on a trial cruise. Do you wish to go as my lieutenant?"

"Thank you, I have other business," said O'Brien, reading hostility in the man but not comprehending it.

"So I have heard," said Beauchene, and laughed. "How about taking your fine frigate and cruising in company with me?"

Seeing that the man was leading up to something, O'Brien drove in ahead of him.

"I don't care for your company, Chevalier," he said coolly. "To tell the truth, it rather pollutes the air—"

With a roar of rage, Beauchene was on his feet, knife lashing out. O'Brien hit him across the face with a pewter mug and dropped him with the blood spurting. A crowd intervened hastily, and Morpain drew O'Brien aside.

"You'll have to meet him for this, m'sieu. To be frank, it is a question of a lady—"

"I will not," said O'Brien, with a shrug. "I meet whom I choose. If he bothers me again, I'll kill him. So let it lie at that."

He went his ways, but the affair had turned him a little sick, and when he met the healing warmth of Roisin's eyes, he felt impelled to get away from this place, out of it all.

"What say you, Roisin?" he exclaimed on impulse. "When St. Rocher will be back, is hard to tell. Shall we slap a crew aboard the *Jacobus* and take her for a cruise? We might go to meet St. Rocher, for that matter—anything to be away from here, out to sea!"

"When?" was all she said.

"Tomorrow noon."

"Agreed, Shamus."

O'Brien hastened back to the frigate, picked Denis O'Neill for lieutenant, and sent him to fetch men aboard.

All that night they poured in, and some of them O'Brien took, but more he did not. English there were plenty, and he took these rather than French or Spanish, for the filibusters were drawn from all races. Ere midnight he had a full two hundred men aboard, had appointed his officers, and had only stores and fresh water to get aboard with morning. His letters of marque had already been sent down from the governor's house.

Of Beauchene he heard nothing more, except that the man had left to take out his new brig.

So it happened that with the next day O'Brien found himself sailing out of Basse Terre again. Roisin stood beside him on the poop, and not in boots and small clothes either, but wrapped in a gorgeous cloak of crimson and gold that became her handsomely. When the salutes had ceased reechoing and the *Jacobus* was standing out, O'Brien turned to her and smiled.

"Off, Little Rose! We'll meet St. Rocher and the galley, and make our plans for Caracas and the Brazil coasts, eh?"

"Perchance," she said. "And perchance things will turn out otherwise, Shamus. It is in my mind that destiny is hard upon you and upon us all, but I do not know why I think so."

O'Brien laughed a little at this saying, but he remembered it two mornings afterward.

UPON the third morning out from Basse Terre, a crepitation of gunfire came rolling down the sea.

Whence it came was hard to say. A light air filled the topsails of the *Jacobus*, but close to the water clung the mist of morning, rolling heavily along the waves. The guns came again; this time in a full throated broadside that came with shattering effect through the mist. O'Brien went hastily up the rigging at a call from the man on lookout in the top.

There, above the worst of the cloaking vapors, he sighted the topsails of a ship dead ahead, and not half a mile distant. Then they were gone in a swirl of white. He focused his glass on the point, and after a moment was rewarded as the mist opened out for a moment and gave him full sight of what was passing there.

An exclamation burst from him. There were two vessels—a small brig, turning in frantic flight, no doubt a filibuster; and behind her, with foremast down and a wild tangle of spars and canvas over her foredeck, a frigate which O'Brien recognized at a glance. She was the *Yarmouth,* now repaired and refitted, her canvas glittering new and white.

"Killigrew, as I live!" exclaimed O'Brien, as the mist closed down upon the scene once more. "And if only Sir Archibald Murray is aboard her—ha!"

He descended to the deck. Easy enough to guess what had happened. Some French buccaneer had run foul of the *Yarmouth,* or had mistaken her in the mist for a merchantman, and in swift panic had slapped a ragged fire into her, then taking a full crashing broadside as she went veering away. But she had left the frigate crippled, unable to pursue.

"And now, egad, I have her!" he exclaimed eagerly, as he told Roisin and O'Neill what he had seen. "Killigrew's helpless, he can't maneuver, and the mist is going off to the eastward. The wind's freshening fast. I'd give a good deal to see his face when we come bowling out of the fog on top of him!"

"Yet he's helpless, Shamus," said she, looking him in the eyes. O'Brien nodded.

"Oh, I'll not kick a poor devil when he's down, Roisin. But I'll have a bit o' fun with him. And I hope he has the Scot aboard. I like Murray—"

"There is a nice boy aboard that ship, Shamus," she broke in quietly. "A gentle spoken Irish lad, a young officer. I talked with him once or twice, and I'd be sorry to have any hurt come to him from our guns."

O'Brien nodded cheerfully.

"I remember him; one Dillon, a lieutenant. We'll have him aboard. O'Neill! Get your signals ready. When we come up on the ship yonder, let him know we want to speak him. No flag, however. All hands! Clear for action."

Irish and English alike fell to work with a will, whistles shrilled, the ports were triced up, the decks cleared. With all hands at quarters but no colors displayed, the *Jacobus* forged on. The mist was gradually thinning behind and about her as the fresher wind struck, and the sun smote the water with warmth.

So they came suddenly on the *Yarmouth,* not two cables away, and with shouts and drums and trumpets ringing out from her, O'Brien luffed and came up into the wind, across her stern. He leaped to the rail; she was so close that he could have tossed a biscuit aboard her, and saw Killigrew there at the stern rail, and Sir Archibald Murray and other officers.

"Ahoy, Killigrew!" he called, and waved a hand. "Good morning to you, Sir Archibald! Will ye lower a boat and come aboard us for a return visit? And Lieutenant Dillon is bid likewise, for there's a lady would speak with him."

They stared down at him in silence, all aghast for a moment. O'Brien laughed gaily.

"Come, Killigrew, call truce for an hour! I'd like a word with you and Murray."

"It's you, O'Brien?" roared Killigrew. "More of your tricks?"

"Devil a trick," said O'Brien. "If ye owe me ill will for shooting the spars out of you at Saona Isle, be thankful I didn't put shot into your decks. Come along and break a bottle and leave the guns rest until the both of us are on an even footing."

"Sink me if he isn't a gentleman!" he heard Killigrew exclaim. "Aye, of course we'll come aboard. Truce if ye like, O'Brien."

So a boat was swung out from the *Yarmouth,* and presently Killigrew and Murray came up the gangway of the *Jacobus,* with young Dillon following them. They greeted O'Brien stiffly, but Murray, flushing a little, put out a hand to him.

"I'll be sorry to hang you when the day comes, O'Brien."

O'Brien smiled.

"Faith, the sorrow will be mine! But come below a moment, for there's a lady waiting."

He led them to the cabin, where Roisin met their amazed eyes, and they bowed over her hand clumsily.

"The marquesa!" exclaimed Dillon. "Madame, I have been sore at heart, thinking of you in the hands of buccaneers—"

"Faith, it's the buccaneers are in her hands!" said O'Brien blithely. "Sit you down, gentlemen, and—"

He paused, at sound of an uproar of voices from the deck. As they looked one at another, O'Neill came hastily breaking in upon them, his face a blaze of excitement.

"Cap'n! On deck!" he burst out. "The fog's opened up—there's a fleet in sight and bearing down on us from the south'ard!"

It was scarce two minutes since they had left the deck. In this short time the mist had suddenly been rolled away by the wind and sun, opening out across a vast stretch of sea, shredding off into scattered banks of vapor.

And there, a mile or a little more to the south, and bearing up for them under towering masses of canvas, were five great ships, and a smaller one trailing with them—the same brig which had poured her shot into the *Yarmouth*. When all of them had come out to the rail, a bitter oath burst from Killigrew.

"Frenchmen, by the Lord Harry!" he said, and put up his hands, shouting lustily at his own craft. "Cut away, there, cut away! Clear for action!"

O'Brien turned to him.

"Man, you can't fight five of them—all forty-gun ships or larger. And you're unable to run—"

Killigrew faced him and squared his burly shoulders. His jaw snapped like that of a bulldog.

"Damme if I'll run!" he said slowly. "True, I can't run—but I can fight. And fight 'em I will. There'll be no striking aboard the *Yarmouth* this day. Murray, are you with me?"

"Aye," said the dour Scot, a flash in his eye. "To the end, gentlemen. Let's aboard."

THEY started for the waist, calling their boat's crew and Dillon after them. Then Roisin came up to O'Brien and touched his arm.

"Don't let the boy go, Shamus. It's death for him."

"What's he to you?" said O'Brien, meeting her level gaze.

"Like my own dead son, Shamus."

He groaned a little.

"Faith, ye know not what you ask, woman—"

"Nonetheless, I ask it."

He strode along the deck swiftly and caught Dillon by the arm as the latter was following the others over the rail. He jerked Dillon aside.

"Wait here," he said. "I have need of you." Then he looked over at the boat. "Killigrew, I'm keeping Dillon here."

"Be damned to you!" roared up the Englishman angrily, and shook his fist. "Push off."

A dismayed oath burst from Dillon, and he would have gone headlong over the rail, but O'Brien seized him. Hot eyed with anger, Dillon turned on him; but just then Roisin came up, caught his arm and spoke quietly. Dillon saw the boat spurting away for the *Yarmouth*, and a groan came from his very heart for the dishonor that was upon him, and he let Roisin take his arm and lead him aft in silence.

The crew of the *Yarmouth* had swarmed aloft, working like madmen. Even before Killigrew regained her, the wreckage had been cleared away. Her foremast was gone a dozen feet above the deck, but lines had been hastily bent on, the big spritsail bellied out from its yard, and the great mainsail fell. The banner of England broke out from poop and maintruck, and she was underway—unable to run, indeed, unable to handle swiftly, but nonetheless able to fight.

And Killigrew would fight until the deck sank under him. O'Brien had seen it in the man's whole bearing. Striding aft, he was joined by O'Neill, the boatswain, and the other officers he had appointed, and they watched the French ships bearing down in a double line, the white flag running up aboard them, the brig making the third of one line. O'Neill touched O'Brien's arm.

"Yonder brig, Master," said he, "is Beauchene's ship."

O'Brien nodded and said no word, though his blue eyes hardened a little. Presently Dillon came up to him, with face all drawn and strained.

"By God, O'Brien, can you see those men fight and not give help?" he cried. O'Brien looked at him curiously.

"My own flag is French," he answered with a shrug. "My king's in France. Every damned Englishman alive can be sunk before I'd turn a hand to help him. Do you know those ships? If so, name 'em over to me."

"I know all but one, for we've studied their types," said Dillon. "Damn you! Aye, I know 'em. That's the *Licorne,* fifty-six, with her ensign at the mizzen to show there's a vice-admiral in command. Two forty-eights, the *Couronne* and the *Guise.* The forty-two, leading the brig, is the *Biscaye.* The other's a thirty-six, but I don't know her. And any one of them more than a match for us! Why don't the damned dogs draw off and come one at a time?"

"They're not fools," said O'Brien coolly. "And Killigrew is, or he'd strike."

"Aye," said Denis O'Neill in Irish, giving him a sidelong look, "the same sort of fool as yourself, Shamus O'Brien, were your Honor in his place."

O'Brien said nothing to that. A gun spoke out from the *Licorne,* and Killigrew answered it; his frigate handled badly. The Frenchmen had the weather-gage of him now, but they disdained to take advantage of it. Opening out, they bore down to pass on either side of him. His yards swung about.

"By the lord, he's taking their challenge!" cried O'Brien eagerly. "The madman—his one chance was to avoid their broadsides!"

Roisin came and leaned over the rail beside him, her face was close to his.

"So very sane yourself, Shamus?" she said softly. "'Were your Honor in his place,' said that man of yours. And what would your Honor do, if you were in his place? Tell me."

"I'd not lie to and let 'em send me fighting to the bottom," said O'Brien, then he turned to her, for something in her voice drew him. "Eh? What mean you, Little Rose? You don't mean you have any sympathy for those cursed Englishmen?"

"No?" said she. "Have you?"

"Devil a bit."

"You lie, and you know it," she answered softly. "You find it hard to remember they're Englishmen, eh? Well, well, it's none of my affair."

Guns thundered suddenly, for white plumes of smoke had billowed out from the sides of the *Yarmouth* as the double line of ships came sweeping down, one on either hand. Now white came spouting from them also; they reeled to the shock of the recoil, the thunderous crashing lifting sullenly. None of them heeded the *Jacobus,* for beyond doubt Beauchene had told them already what she was.

It seemed that when this pall of smoke lifted there would be no *Yarmouth* left, after that murderous series of broadsides. Yet through the smoke pierced the red flashes of her guns, steadily, repeatedly; and when things cleared off she was there, her yards squared away, running almost yard to yard with the French thirty-six, pouring shot into her. Then she fell away, staggered, and her tophamper came down in a tangle.

"That ends her," said O'Brien, watching the men swarming out to cut away the wreckage, as the French line luffed and bore back. "Now they'll surround her and hammer her."

He became aware of Roisin's face turned toward him.

"I have heard many strange tales told of the great families of Ireland," said she, in her low, rich voice, "but I have not heard it said that any chieftain would stand by and see brave men die when he might aid them.”

Color rushed into the face of O’Brien.

“Woman, would you make a fool of me?” he said harshly.

“God forbid! I’d have you be what you are, Shamus, whether fool or wise man.”

“Duar na Criosd! It’d be throwing away all of life and hope and future—”

“What were they worth, if you could not look the past in the eye?” said she.

O’Brien looked out at the ships sweeping down on the *Yarmouth,* and bit his lip. White smoke puffed out, as Killigrew poured a broadside into the *Biscaye;* then, unexpectedly, he wore about so that his other broadside was emptied into the same ship pointblank. When the smoke cleared, the water all about the *Yarmouth* was spouting as shot from the other frigates thundered at her, but the *Biscaye* was staggering away down the wind, a reeling, stricken thing out of control, leaning far over, and the filibuster brig standing by to her help.

“By the Lord, he tore the bottom out of her!” cried O’Brien. From his men clustered along the rail he heard a sudden wild, exultant cheer, and felt like echoing it himself.

Next moment silence fell again. The French ships had driven on, and were forming up once more, but behind them lay the *Yarmouth,* dismasted now, a sodden hulk. As they looked, a spot of color appeared forward. It was her ensign, being hammered to the stump of the foremast.

“All hands!” O’Brien’s voice went blaring down the deck. “Clear for action. Two men to the helm with me. Shake out the topsails—look alive, all hands!”

AS HE stood by the helm, Roisin came up to him. He gave her a swift look.

“There’ll be splinters flying here, Little Rose—”

“Here I stay,” she said, and laughed. “So you’re a fool, Shamus? God love ye for it! You’ll put up the flag of England?”

“Damned if I will,” he said. “I’m not fighting for England. Dillon, will you take command of the starboard tier below?”

“I will that, praise be!” yelled Dillon eagerly.

“Double shot every gun,” said O’Brien, and shouted the order at his men in the waist. When he turned to the woman again, there was a blaze in his eyes and a laughing exultation in his face that transfigured him.

“Here’s an end to us all, Roisin,” he cried, “but be sure of one thing, my lass! It’s you that were made for me, aye, from the start of the world; and if we were young again with the blackbirds whistling down the road, it’s myself would prove it to you. But there’s naught to hear us now but the guns, Roisin, and each other, and what I have in my soul to say to you, will be said elsewhere. Good comrade!”

“Good comrade, Shamus,” she said, her eyes shining. “Faith, there’s no need of words between us.”

Nor was there, indeed; and no further chance for them either.

The four towering Frenchmen had come down upon the *Yarmouth* and, as Killigrew’s guns thundered out at them, their broadsides began to crash. They came about her, all four of them, their starboard broadsides double manned, and in the rising cloud of smoke they did not see the *Jacobus* heading toward them across the wind. A mile away the *Biscaye* had gone down, and the brig was picking up her men.

O’Brien swung the helm, and at his voice the whistle shrilled and men tailed on the lines and the frigate swung sharply about. They were in the smoke now, and O’Brien thought once of St. Rocher, and wished that stout heart were with him—then the great shape of the *Licorne* loomed up ahead and, as they drove past her, he gave the word to fire.

Crash! Yells made response, and the *Jacobus* reeled to the shock of recoil.

The wind came down in a puff that cleared away the smoke for a moment. The *Guise* lay to starboard, and so close came O'Brien that he could see the powder grimed men looking through the open ports and over her rail at him. Again Dillon's guns crashed and thundered, then the helm spun and she came about, and the larboard broadside spoke in a shattering detonation. But with this, the French had taken warning, and the *Couronne* let fly a broadside that smashed slap into the frigate, and the unknown thirty-six drew up and let fly another. She took a reply from Dillon's guns that swept her decks in red ruin.

Then, for a little space, O'Brien was clear of them all, and wore about to find them drawing away from the battered *Yarmouth.* He looked about for Roisin, saw her lying on the deck and leaped to her. A splinter had shattered the man beside her and knocked her senseless. O'Neill came running up at his call.

"Carry her below to the cabin—the little one amidships, where it's safest," he ordered, and breathed more freely at seeing her off the deck.

Then to the helm again, and the *Jacobus* drove square down at the Frenchmen as though to meet them yardarm to yardarm. Well enough did O'Brien know that in choosing his part this day he had broken irrevocably with all the past, and had naught to expect from the future either. If he drew out of this affair at all, he could hope for nothing more than the status of a rank pirate—but he had cast reason overboard, and bore on, a smile curving his lips and his blue eyes blazing.

And now, when the four great ships were dead ahead of him, he suddenly began to fight; not with his guns, but with his head and wheel and ship, for he had gained the weathergage of them and meant to take full advantage of it.

Vainly the four of them tried to corner him. He luffed and wore, took every chance of wind and sea, while the guns thundered and the shot crashed into him. He caught the thirty-six unawares and sent two smashing broadsides slap into her stern, sent her drifting away down the wind with her rudder gone and her masts overside, then ran in alongside the huge *Licorne,* gave her gun for gun, and two for one, and was gone before she could reload. And still the *Yarmouth* fought on amid them all, as the *Guise* tried to lay her aboard and was hammered off.

Now the *Couronne* came driving in amid the smoke, and ran along within twenty feet of the *Jacobus,* broadside roaring away, balls plowing the deck, musketry striking down men with hails of bullets from poop and top. O'Brien groaned as he looked along his decks, which had become a red shambles.

Naked men, black with powder, brought up kegs, swabbed the hot guns, ran with water to sluice them down, tailed on the lines. The *Couronne* drew ahead, and O'Brien suddenly luffed under her stern and poured a full broadside across her decks. With a roar and a crash, her splintered masts and canvas came down; a dismantled, reeling wreck, she went careening away, to fetch up almost alongside the *Yarmouth.* Killigrew promptly engaged her in a death grapple.

The *Jacobus* shivered suddenly, heeled over, erupted in shrieks and splinters. A full broadside from the *Licorne* had caught her to larboard, dismounting and silencing her entire upper tier of guns there, blowing her forecastle into a splintered chaos, killing a score of men. Dillon appeared suddenly in the smoke beside O'Brien, blood pumping from a wound across his breast.

"Give me—a chance!" he yelled frenziedly. "We've got red hot shot ready to load! Run us close in—"

"Load," shouted O'Brien, putting his strength at the helm. "Your chance is coming now."

It was coming indeed. The smoke blew down to leeward, to show the big *Licorne* lying caught in stays, taken aback, momentarily helpless. O'Brien held for her, and Denis O'Neill came staggering up to him, wild eyed.

"We've not sixty men left—"

"Man every starboard gun, and quick about it!" blared O'Brien. "Quick!"

The other dashed off. Sunk was the *Biscaye,* the thirty-six was drifting downwind, Killigrew had grappled the *Couronne.* The *Guise* was wearing, coming about to engage O'Brien, but she was too late to save her consort. O'Brien luffed under the stern of the huge *Licorne,* her musketeers and sternchasers blazing away in futile wrath, and so closely that his yards almost scraped her high poop.

The blast of his full starboard broadside, alow and aloft, ripped into her, tore all her stern and poop to shreds, raked her lower tier. A great scream of wounded men came out of her, and she went heaving away like a hideous hurt creature as the *Guise* came driving down.

"Larboard guns all useless," panted a man, stumbling up. "Hardly a full gun crew left to man 'em—"

"All hands to the starboard batteries," said O'Brien, coolly. The other cried out:

"Cap'n! You're wounded—there's blood—"

"Shut your mouth, ye fool!" snapped O'Brien. "All hands to starboard!"

The man darted away hastily. A seaman came up to help with the helm, but as he gripped it he lurched. A hail of bullets tore all around. A crash of guns, a wild medley of yells—and O'Brien swung around to see the forgotten brig crossing under his stern, raking him with her small arms and her brass culverins, Beauchene standing in her chains to throw a grappling iron.

Desperately O'Brien swung on the wheel. He had overlooked Beauchene, but now he had him. He sent a yell forward, the men passing it on as they swabbed. The *Jacobus* came about and an instant later reeled to a crunching shock as she collided with the brig, which lay under her forefoot. And Dillon's lower tier blazed into the brig, guns depressed, bags of bullets sweeping the crowded decks. She sheered off and away. Beauchene was wounded, and after that bitter pill his men had no heart for more.

In her place loomed up the *Guise.* No escaping her now; she caught O'Brien on his wounded counter, sent a storm of shot hurtling into the *Jacobus.* Down came yards and tophamper; the whole larboard side was a stricken wreck; some one passed up word that Dillon was dead and O'Neill dying.

O'Brien worked with the few men at hand, slashing away, reeving lines; they got the wreckage cleared and the foreyard up again, just as the smoke lifted momentarily. A feeble cheer came from larboard, and O'Brien saw that Killigrew had taken his prey, for the English flag was up above the *Couronne* now.

"Starboard batteries — all hands!" blared O'Brien's voice, and he was alone as they went stumbling away to obey him. He was looking out at where the *Licorne* lay, with men slung over repairing her rudder post, and the *Guise* standing by her before returning to the fight. The wheel jerked at him, and his hands felt weak on the spokes, until suddenly they spun freely, and he looked to see Roisin there at his side, lending her strength.

"Aye, this is the place for you, after all," said O'Brien hoarsely, and laughed. "Down! We must take their broadside —down, I say!"

"O'Donnell Abu!" rang out her voice. "Never down, O'Brien of my heart, never down, but up and take it! I'll hold her now—"

She staggered and her voice died. White clouds erupted from the *Licorne* and the *Guise,* and there was a whistle and screaming in the air all about. The rigging was rent and ripped, the sails torn into ribbons; but the *Jacobus* held on, answered her helm. A red mist was before O'Brien's eyes. With an effort he straightened up, swung on the spokes —and as she came around, the starboard guns thundered one by one, pouring death into the two Frenchmen. A ripping, rending crash, and over the rail went the foremast, taking the sprit along.

A last gun or two from the *Guise*. O'Brien staggered. The helm was smashed and splintered out of his hands. He groped out blindly, and felt soft strong hands clutch him and heard the voice of Roisin ringing in sudden wild exultation.

“English ships to starboard! Two of them standing for us—the smoke's going—”

O'Brien tried to see, but blood had filled his eyes and his head drooped.

“Aye, the smoke's going,” he muttered. “And life's going, and all else; and well spent, Roisin, well spent! And if not, then Murray will get his wish and hang me—”

He laughed wildly and then slumped down to the deck, above the pieces of his splintered wheel. And beneath him the *Jacobus* heaved sullenly to the long swells, and wounded men yelled frantically that she was going down under them.

She was, indeed, but O'Brien was past knowing or caring.

“AYE, mistress, it's my duty to hang him, and hang him I will,” said dour Sir Archibald Murray, as he talked with the Marquesa de Guimares. “But it's not said when he's to be hanged, and I'll not hang him until the next ship comes from England. He'll not be ready for hanging until then, either.”

“And when will that be?” said she.

“Mayhap next week, or next month, or next year,” said Murray, and took his leave with a very low bow.

Many weeks had passed, and all this while O'Brien lay in the pleasant house of the vice-governor, above Kingston harbor, and those that lived of his men lay in the great jail on the plain outside Kingston. The marquesa, cured of her own slight wounds, had become O'Brien's nurse; for his wounds had been slow in healing, since Jamaica was very hot, and had passed into a fever that all but took his life. He knew not a soul around him, nor anything that passed, and was become a shadow of a man.

So the marquesa, helpless, knew that Murray was awaiting word from London, and would surely hang O'Brien when the word came.

Another fortnight passed, and a Dutch ship put into Kingston and dropped a single passenger, and went her ways again. The passenger displayed his papers and paid his respects to Government House; he was a noble Spaniard, a relative of the Marquesa de Guimares, who had come from Havana upon learning that she was here. A tall, saturnine man, he was escorted to Murray's house, and the marquesa received him, alone.

“You!” she exclaimed as she came into the room. “M. de St. Rocher—”

“No,” he said, bowing over her hand. “The Marquis de Manneville, if it please you; but here, a Spaniard and your relative. Where is he?”

She made a helpless gesture.

“Sleeping quietly, for the first time. The governor's surgeon says he will waken either to life or death, and knows not which.”

“The devil!’ said St. Rocher, strode up and down the room, and halted. “Look you, madame, I am ready to carry him off. A ship is waiting, his own Barbary galley. At a signal from me, boats will land up the coast—”

“He can not be moved,” she said quietly. “And Murray will hang him,” she added, and went on to tell of Murray's words. St. Rocher frowned.

“Bad news,” he said. “We passed two English frigates yesterday, coming from England. I can see him?”

“Better not, until he wakes,” she said. “I will summon you. Remember, the black servants carry tales.”

St. Rocher assented grudgingly. He was assigned quarters in Murray's house, however, for the marquesa said that he was her cousin.

With the next sunrise, signal guns

told that the London frigates were sighted standing in for the harbor, and O'Brien wakened.

He looked up at St. Rocher, and a thin smile touched his pallid lips. He met the eyes of the marquesa, clasped her hand, and life came into his face. She bent over him.

"No talk, no talk, *mo mhuirnin!*" she murmured in Irish. "Drink, sleep, and talk when you wake again."

He assented, and took the drink that the surgeon held to his lips, and closed his eyes. The surgeon bent over him for a space, then rose.

"Life," he said laconically. "I must advise Sir Archibald—he was most insistent that I bring him word at once."

He departed; and from the terrace before the house St. Rocher and the marquesa watched the two frigates come to anchor and send in their boats. They breakfasted there, and were talking together an hour later, when Sir Archibald Murray came striding up, with his wig all askew, his coat half buttoned and a packet of papers in his hand. He joined them and, panting a little, took a paper from the packet and opened it in trembling hands.

"Here it is," he said harshly, and did not observe that St. Rocher fingered something inside his coat, as it might be a poniard there. A black man came running.

"Master!" he cried. "He's wakened again and asking—"

"Be silent," said Murray, and turned to the marquesa. He thrust the paper at her. "There, madame," he said. "Take it. Let him have it from your own hand. The attainder's wiped out, a full pardon granted him—and he's Sir James O'Brien, with the thanks of Parliament and of their Majesties for his gallantry."

With a quick, sharp little cry, Roisin seized the document and was gone. Murray dropped into a chair.

"Thank God!" he said. "I'd have hanged the damned rascal if it was my last act—and it would have broken my heart." He drew a deep breath, and glanced up at St. Rocher. "Eh, eh? You heard, señor?" he asked in Spanish.

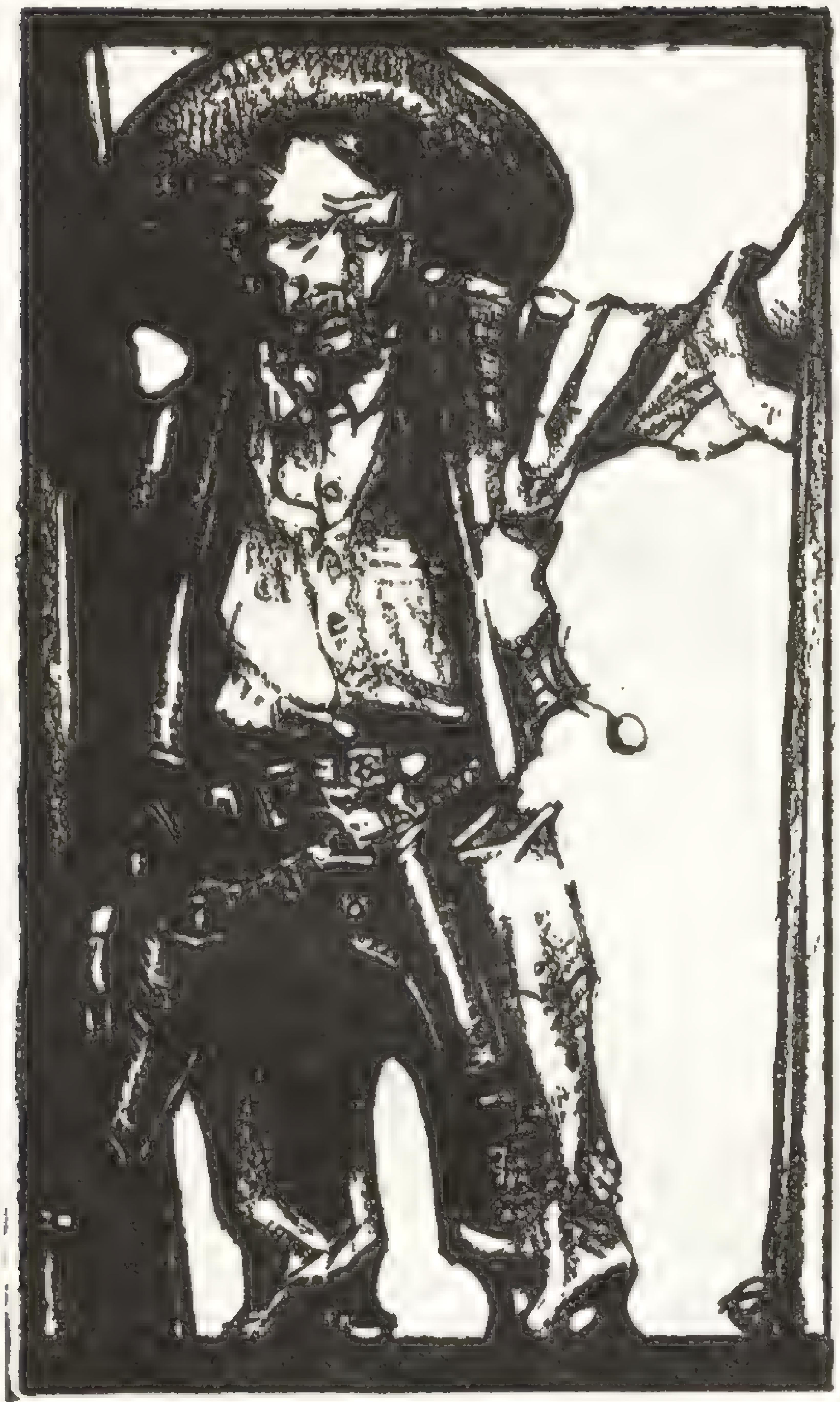
"I do not understand English, señor," said St. Rocher, and went to the edge of the terrace, turning his back for a moment. He tossed something into the flowering bushes—a little jeweled poniard, a splendid toy to be thus flung away by a careless Spanish Don.

He stood looking out at the sea, then swung around suddenly. Murray straightened up. Their eyes went to Roisin, who had appeared in the doorway. She said no word, but her hand went out toward Murray, and from it fluttered the document, torn across and across.

Murray started to his feet, and then a grimace twisted his thin lips.

"Oh, aye?" he exclaimed. "If King James had half the spirit of those who serve him, he'd be in Whitehall today. Well, madame, whether the paper be torn or not doesn't affect the matter a whit. I can't hang him for refusing a knighthood from my king, thank God!"

And he stooped to pick up the scraps of paper, looking very cheerful about it, too.



TWO-GUN *Turns the* TABLES

By HOWARD ELLIS DAVIS

TWO-GUN Pete Waters stood on the front gallery of his daughter's little home and surveyed the throngs gathering on the street. At his hips, sheathed in their leather holsters, hung two heavy revolvers.

It was a Saturday, and on Saturday afternoons and evenings in small country towns in the South, not only the local citizens turn out in force, but the farmers and negro field hands of the surrounding country come in to do their trading and mingle with their fellows.

Between his lips, Two-Gun held a quill toothpick of his own manufacture, which he now and then meditatively clicked against his few remaining teeth. Without waiting for Bob and the children, Bess had given him his supper early, as she always did on Saturdays; for he was a deputy sheriff and must be about his duties. Not on regular pay, his duties to the county consisted mostly in serving papers, for which he received a fee. And on these Saturdays, clothed in his own dignity and the majesty of the law, he ranged the town.

At other times he was quite an ordinary old fellow, gentle, obliging, beloved by all his neighbors. In his younger days he had been a carpenter, and he contributed quite substantially to the larder of Bess and his son-in-law, Bob, from the income which the rent of three small cottages brought him.

Shortly after the death of his wife, following the pleadings of a dream that had been with him always, he had gone West, out into the bad man's country. He didn't stay long, and no one could ever get him to talk of his life out there.

"It jest didn't agree with me," he declared.

Why it did not agree with him he would not explain.

He had brought back with him these two big revolvers—six shooters—which sagged at the hips in true Western style. He let Bob and Bess and the adoring grandchildren infer what they would. The belt that held them hung over the head of his bed in the little room he had built for himself in the back yard, out near the cow lot. When engaged in his official duties serving papers, or on these Saturdays, he might forget to pin on the shiny badge which was his by virtue of his office—in fact he often did forget the badge; but he always strapped on the guns.

Carefully placing the quill toothpick in the watch pocket of his trousers, Two-Gun sauntered down the steps and out upon the sidewalk. Soon he was downtown among the stores, where the crowds were thickest, stepping jauntily along, his small figure erect, his soft hat at a rakish angle. His blue denim shirt was open at the throat, and the thinness of his leathery old neck brought into prominence the size of his adam's apple.

Small boys gazed at him admiringly; negroes doffed their hats, accorded him a white toothed smile and with, "Evenin' Mist' Two-Gun," gave him most of the sidewalk. His old friends and neighbors respectfully gave him the civilian's salute, which they thought quite military. When he saw a stranger watching him, he would pause, thoughtfully stroke his drooping mustache with the knuckle of his dog finger and look about, as if at any moment his eagle eye might detect something that needed his official attention.

Turning presently into Milt Sapwood's grocery store, Two-Gun stood watching the crowd, which was milling about like a drove of restless cattle. Milt's store was arranged like one of these newfangled chain stores. But of course it wasn't, in a true sense of the word; for while the goods were displayed where the customers could help themselves—quite a saving in clerical force—most of them were charged.

An old friend of Two-Gun's, Uncle Mose Jenkins, a white haired negro, was standing near a table heaped with loaves of bread, sanitarilly wrapped in glazed paper. In spite of the heat of this Summer evening, Mose wore a long tailed coat, green with age. Though his shirt was ragged and his trousers and broken shoes were nondescript, the coat gave him a genteel appearance.

For a while Mose stood examining the loaves of bread, as if trying to decide upon one for his purchase. Then, after carefully looking about him, he slipped a loaf into the tail pocket of his coat.

Never out of character when on his official duties, Two-Gun at once confronted him. He crouched. His hands dropped to the butts of his pistols. His eyes blazed.

"Put up yo' hands," he snarled. "Put 'em up quick, 'fo' I pump you full of lead."

Uncle Mose's hands at once shot ceilingward.

"Don't shoot, Mist' Two-Gun," he quavered in terror. "Don't shoot. 'Fo' Gawd, I ain't done nothin'."

A hush had fallen on the crowd of shoppers. Milt Sapwood left his place behind the cash register and the day book and came forward with dignity.

"What's the trouble, Two-Gun?" he asked respectfully.

Without relaxing the tenseness of his crouch or taking his blazing eyes from his trembling captive, Two-Gun said out of the corner of his mouth—

"In his coat-tail pocket."

Milt recovered the loaf and returned it to the counter.

"So you were in here stealing my goods," the storekeeper said. "If it hadn't been for Two-Gun, no telling what you would have walked off with."

"I wasn't stealin' nothin', Mist' Milt," Uncle Mose declared. " 'Fo' Gawd I wasn't. I was only borryin' hit till I could git de dime."

"I'm not in the lendin' business," Milt said sarcastically. Two hundred pounds of righteous indignation, he glanced about for the approval of the interested spectators.

"Why was you a-stealin' that there bread, Mose?" Two-Gun asked suspiciously.

"I wasn't stealin' hit, Mist' Two-Gun. 'Fo' Gawd, I wasn't. I was only borryin' hit till—"

"Why was you borryin' it, then?"

"Kase we ain't got a dust of nothin' to eat in de house. My rheumatiz has been so bad I couldn't 'tend no gardens; an' Milly is down in de bed sick, an' can't take in no washin'. We's 'tween a rock an' a hard place, Mist' Two-Gun."

SLOWLY Two-Gun relaxed, his hands dropped to his sides, the glare left his eyes.

"I always did say you was too proud for yo' own good, Mose," he said more gently.

"So proud that you'd rather steal then beg," Milt added.

"Milt," Two-Gun said sternly, turning upon the storekeeper, "didn't Mose tell you he wasn't stealin' that there bread, that he was only borryin' it till he could git the dime to bring you? Put him up half a bushel of meal an' a slab of sowbelly an' charge it to my account."

"And a pound of coffee and charge it to my account," added Mrs. Brown, a sharp featured elderly woman.

Soon Milt was busily adding items to a list which he himself supplemented. He put the articles into a meal sack. The heavy bag over his shoulder, Uncle Mose stood humbly with his hat in his hand, the tears glistening in his rheumy old eyes.

"Thankee, white folks," he said, bobbing his head. "Thankee kindly, Mist' Two-Gun. De Lawd will sho bless you fo' helpin' two po' old niggers over a mighty tight place."

His hat still in his hand, he limped slowly from his audience in Milt Sapwood's store.

"I always performs my duties with a open mind," Two-Gun explained to the throng which had gathered about him. Milt had the cigar box on the counter and the deputy was carefully selecting one to his liking. He clipped the end, lighted it, rolled it about between his lips, then clamped it firmly with the two teeth that still met. "In course, I has to do my duty. Ef I found one of my own kin breakin' the law, I'd arrest him, quick as I would anybody else; but I makes it a rule always to hold a open mind."

So often had Two-Gun made this explanation about his open mind that several among the listeners smiled. He did not notice this; but as he turned to leave the store, he was acutely conscious of the grin with which he was greeted by his arch enemy, Lem Ansley.

Ansley was editor and sole reporter of the *Weekly Clarion*. On these Saturday evenings he was always poking about town looking for news. Evidently, unknown to Two-Gun, he had seen this whole thing. Lem was a humorist and nothing furnished him with a better opportunity to display his skill than these adventures of the open minded Two-Gun, which the old deputy himself took so seriously.

In his mind's eye, Two-Gun could see the facetious item recounting the incident which had just occurred. Some one would read it to him, for he never read Lem's paper:

> Our daring deputy, Two-Gun Pete, made a sensational arrest in Milt Sapwood's store late last Saturday afternoon. But because of the open mind with which he always goes about his duties, instead of taking the culprit off to jail, he sent him home with a bag of rations, giving thanks and praising the Lord.

Then, in Lem's best humorous style —humor at the expense of Two-Gun— would follow a description of the incident.

Two-Gun's ambition had always been

to appear in print as the central figure in some desperate act of heroism. Perhaps some one would rob the bank, or murder one of the citizens. Two-Gun would appear at the opportune moment. At a distance of twenty paces, their pistols flaming, he and the villain would pump hot lead into each other. He would get the other fellow; but perhaps Two-Gun himself would fall. In that event, of course, he could not read about it; but Bess and Bob and the children and all his friends and neighbors would. And his funeral procession would be a mile long. Even that grinning ape, Lem Ansley, could find nothing humorous to write about in such an end. And perhaps even one of the big city papers would carry the story.

All the joy from his adventure gone, Two-Gun brushed past Lem and went again to the street. But he strolled along just as jauntily, the cigar pointing skyward from the corner of his mouth.

Crash-bang!

Following the smash behind him was the sound of tinkling glass, and Two-Gun whirled on his heel just in time to see big Jim Bates, so drunk that he swayed on his feet, hurl a second brick into the show window of the Happy Thought Drug Store, knocking out the remainder of the plate glass front.

In a moment Two-Gun had confronted him. He crouched. His hands dropped to the butts of his pistols. His eyes blazed.

"Put 'em up!" he commanded. "I seen you in the act. You can't deny it, Jimmy Bates. Put 'em up, 'fo' I pump you full of lead!"

Now Bates was known and feared by most of his fellow citizens as a bad actor, and when he was drinking they gave him plenty of room. The uniformed town constable had hurried to the scene; but he didn't come all the way, when he saw who had smashed the window. The crowd on the sidewalk backed off.

From his commanding height Bates gazed contemptuously down on the militant little figure. His hard, ugly face broke into a sarcastic smile.

"Git out of my way, you fo'-flushin' li'l doodlebug," he snarled, "'fo' I step on you an' sqush you. Git out of my way 'fo' I spit on you an' drown you."

Two-Gun could scarcely believe his ears. He could scarcely believe that anybody would speak to him in such a manner. And, of all people, Jimmy Bates, whom he had known since Jimmy was born, whose first hook he had baited over on Sandy Creek, who had grown up as one of his staunchest admirers!

TWO-GUN forgot his rôle as guardian of the law. He forgot everything but the impudence of Jimmy Bates. The leering, sarcastic grin goaded him to action. He had dealt with Jimmy when he was a bad small boy. He now dealt with him again.

"Why you impident whippersnapper!" he shouted. Springing forward, he caught the big man by his shirt front with one hand and brought him a resounding slap on the side of his drink flushed face with the other. "I've been warnin' you 'bout this here drinkin'! Step on me, will you! Spit on me, will you! Sqush me, will you! Drown me, will you!"

With each exclamation, he slapped Bates in the face, first on one side, then on the other.

The alarmed spectators stood gasping. The town constable was undecided whether to begin shooting, or to call for volunteers and make a rush.

Then other sounds reached their ears —the pleadings and heartwrenching sobs of the bad man of the town.

"Please, Unc' Pete! You ought not do me this way. I won't sqush you. I won't drown you. You ought not treat me this way." His heart broken, he wept aloud.

Trying to cuddle his head on Two-Gun's shoulder, he had to lean so far that he lost his balance and sat down heavily.

"Git up from there, you impident

skunk," Two-Gun commanded him. "You've got drunk an' disturbed the peace, broke the law an' damaged propity. Git ahead of me an' start movin'."

After several ineffectual attempts to rise, Bates started crawling away on his hands and knees, Two-Gun prodding him from behind with the toe of his shoe, commanding him to stand upon his feet. Bates' arms suddenly collapsed and he fell over on his chest. His face bumped against the sidewalk. Again he sobbed aloud.

Two-Gun stooped and tugged at him.

"Gimme a hand, somebody," he said, and several prominent citizens leaped to his assistance.

They got Bates upon his feet and Two-Gun placed his arm about him. Tacking from side to side, covering the entire width of the sidewalk, they started down the street. The crowd followed. At last they were going to see Two-Gun take a prisoner to jail. There was no room for any talk of open mindedness here. To expedite matters, several offered the use of their automobiles.

They were doomed to disappointment. When Two-Gun reached the front gate of his house, he led the wobbling Bates inside, conducted him around the house, to his own little room in the back yard. Tumbling him on to the bed, he removed the bad man's shoes, and soon Bates was snoring in heavy slumber.

For awhile Two-Gun stood gazing down at the red, puffed face, with its telltale marks of dissipation. Sadly he shook his head. Then, adjusting his spectacles, he seated himself at a table and for an hour labored with pen and ink over a document that was destined to change the life and habits of the drunken sleeper.

The next morning, after buckling on his six-guns, he led his prisoner into a special session of the local court, presided over by the Honorable William A. Moran, mayor of the town. Bates was penitent and very humble. From the effects of his hangover and the black coffee with which Two-Gun had been dosing him since four o'clock, his nerves were shot to pieces and he had the jerks. Refusing to meet the eyes of his fellow citizens gathered in the mayor's office, he sank into a seat and bowed his head.

"Willie," Two-Gun said to the mayor, "my prisoner is here to confess to gittin' drunk, breakin' the law, disturbin' the peace an' damagin' property."

"Twenty-five dollars and thirty days hard labor," barked the Honorable William A. Moran.

"Now, Willie," Two-Gun said judicially, "the fine is all right. It's only right an' just that Jimmie should be made to pay in good, hard cash fo' his misdeeds. But I been lookin' at this here thing with a open mind, an' they ain't no use in stickin' on that there thirty days hard labor. In the first place, who is to look after Jimmy's wife an' babies while he's workin' fo' the town? In the second, Jimmy has signed this here docymint, which I will read to the cote, pledgin' himself to a new life from now on, an' I want to git him started. I will read it to the cote, an' you will keep it here as evidence an' a reminder befo' all citizens of the town that Jimmy is goin' to abide by what he has signed."

Though in the befuddlement of first awakening he had listened gravely while Two-Gun read the paper, and had willingly signed it, Bates now gasped in horror as he heard it again. For he had called on God and man to witness that he hoped the most terrible things would happen to him if, from now on, he did not abstain teetotally from strong drink, work industriously at his job and conduct himself as a law-abiding citizen.

"Twenty-five dollars and costs," barked the mayor, after listening to the paper.

Two-Gun drew a roll of bills from his trousers pocket, slowly counted them, wetted his thumb and counted them again.

"Twenty dollars is all I got with me,

Willie," he said. "An' that'll have to go for the costs, too, kase I ain't got time to git up no mo' now. I've promised Jimmy to help him put in that there glass which the hardware sto' is havin' sent out by truck from the city."

With full assurance that his verdict would be accepted, he placed the bills on the desk of the mayor, who shrugged and nodded to the clerk, and the clerk made the proper entry.

With a mellow sense of well being following a good job successfully carried through to a finish, Two-Gun, trailed by the grateful Jim Bates, was leaving the mayor's office when he came face to face with Lem Ansley, slouched in a chair. The editor grinned up at Two-Gun, and once again all joy departed from the old deputy.

In fact, as the constant drip of water will at last erode even the hardest substance; as light blows, struck long enough in the same place, will finally drive one frantic with pain, the humorous stories which Lem wrote in his paper at the expense of Two-Gun were at last driving much of the peace of mind out of the old deputy's life. Dreading what would appear in print, following anything that would give the editor an excuse to write a story about him, he had begun to brood over the matter.

And Lem, proud of his talent, had begun to expand. Recently, some of his oldest friends—and only his oldest friends would have dared—had joked the old deputy when they laughingly called his attention to these stories in the *Clarion.* Two-Gun treated them with silent contempt. That was why he had not gone to Lem and demanded that he cease his persecution.

SOMETIME during Monday night, following his adventures on Saturday, Two-Gun waked and lay in his bed a-worrying. But the story about him which was sure to appear in the *Clarion,* published each Thursday, was not the only thing on his mind.

Bob had dug some early sweet potatoes. Against Two-Gun's advice, he had put the strings and those too small to eat in a box in the cow lot for Tiny and her calf to feed on. Tiny was a four-gallon Jersey, whom Two-Gun milked night and morning. Her calf, now a yearling, was the pride of his heart. He had told Bob that they were likely to choke on the potatoes; but Bob always was butt-headed.

"I've unchoked 'em by rammin' the limber end of a buggy whip down their th'oat," he had told his son-in-law. "But where could anybody git holt of a buggy whip these days?"

So he lay in his bed a-worrying, tempted to slip out and remove the box of potatoes from the cow lot, though he knew he would have a set-to with Bob the next morning.

Suddenly he raised himself on his elbow. Again, from the direction of the cow lot, it came to him through the open window—a muffled, choking, gasping sound. It didn't sound like a cow trying to cough out a potato lodged in her throat, so he was sure that either Tiny or her calf was in the last throes of strangulation.

Leaping hastily from his bed, Two-Gun went outside and through the gate into the cow lot. A half moon, through scudding clouds, now illumined the world, now was hidden from sight. A soft breeze fluttered the scant bargain counter nightshirt, purchased for him by Bess, which scarcely reached to his knees. He was unmindful of the small stones and irregularities of the ground which pricked sharply at his bare feet. He didn't know what he would use in lieu of a buggy whip; but he did know that something had to be done in a hurry to save the choking animal.

He almost stumbled over Tiny, who was lying down, contentedly chewing her cud. It must be the heifer then, who was nowhere in sight. He was trotting hastily around the corner of the barn when he struck the great toe of his right foot sharply against some object on the ground. Catching the injured member in his hand, he hopped about on one foot, muttering profanely. Then he picked up from the ground a tin hand-pump loaded with fly-scat with which he had been spraying the barn.

"Can't keep nothin' from them younguns," he declared to himself. "They'd find it an' leave it layin' around, no matter where you hid it."

To his surprise, he found the heifer resting peacefully just beyond the corner of the barn. The spray pump in his hand, favoring his injured toe, he was returning to the house when he heard a slight commotion in the lane which ran behind the lot. Going to the fence, he leaned over. The moon came through a rift in the clouds and revealed to him a large automobile parked at one side. From the car, two men were staggering beneath the weight of another, bearing him across the lane toward Two-Gun.

All solicitude, he climbed quickly over the fence.

"Why, what's happened to him?" he asked.

The man who had the other by the feet dropped them and whirled to face Two-Gun. His hand swept to his armpit and a pistol flashed in the moonlight. Too late, the old deputy realized that he had hurled himself unwittingly right into the midst of criminal violence.

Instinctively, he threw up one hand in front of him—the hand that held the squirt gun. With rare presence of mind, he pressed sharply on the piston with the other hand—and shot a spray of the scalding fly-scat directly into the man's face.

With a cry of pain, he dropped the pistol and staggered back, his hands pressed to his eyes. With a thud, his partner dropped his burden, and as Two-Gun turned, he looked directly into the black muzzle of a pistol. Quickly he squatted. The pistol seemed to flash directly in his face, and a bullet took a lock of gray hair from the top of his head.

Again Two-Gun vigorously worked his spray pump, and the man staggered back as if struck in the face with a maul. Once more the pistol flashed, but this time straight up in the air.

The two were now writhing in pain, the first silently, the second shouting blasphemy. The squirt-gun ready in his hand, the old deputy stood watchfully alert.

It was not long before people began to arrive, at first cautiously, then crowding up, upon the assurance of Two-Gun that he had the situation well in hand. The sheriff and the town constable reached there about the same time. Between them, they handcuffed the two criminals and carried them off in the sheriff's car.

The victim was uninjured. When the cords were cut from his wrists and ankles and the gag removed from his mouth, he explained that he had been stopped by the two on the edge of town. He was robbed and forced, at the point of a pistol, to drive into this quiet lane, where he was gagged and bound and removed from the car. After gratefully wringing Two-Gun's hand and offering to divide with him the contents of the restored pocketbook—which the old deputy grandiloquently refused — he drove away, leaving Two-Gun in all his glory.

THOUGH he was now in the full flood of lantern and flashlight, he had completely forgotten his attire. Beginning at the point where he had been lying awake worrying about the potatoes, he recounted what had happened, beginning over again with each new arrival. By sending a spray up into the air from the squirt-gun, he showed them just how he had worked in action.

Suddenly he was arrested by a shriek. Turning his head, he found himself looking into the startled eyes of Mrs. Molly Pitts, who never missed a bit of excitement, nocturnal or otherwise.

"Peter Waters!" In offended modesty she covered her face with her hands.

Thus brought sharply to the realization of how scantily he was clad, Two-Gun whirled in flight. He was elbowing his way through the crowd of laughing men when some one grasped his arm.

"What's the hurry, Uncle Pete?" He looked up into the grinning face of Lem Ansley.

Jerking himself away, Two-Gun climbed the fence and fled to the sanctuary of his room. Turning on the light, he strode up and down, muttering to himself.

"Don't come to my knees," he hurled at his reflection in the mirror, "an' me flirtin' myself out in the presence of wimmin folks."

In a rage, he tore the cheap garment from him and flung it on the floor. Donning a winter nightshirt of cotton flannel, made for him by Bess's deft fingers, which reached to his ankles, he crawled into bed. But when he would compose himself to rest, there, like a specter in the darkness, was the grinning face of Lem Ansley.

Two-Gun felt that this was the end. He knew that he had been ridiculous, dancing about in his nightshirt, squirting fly-scat. And when Lem Ansley got through with him, he would be the laughing stock of the whole county.

The next morning, after carrying in the brimming pail of milk and eating a scanty breakfast, he returned to his room and sat brooding. He had refused the pleas of Bess and the adoring grandchildren to tell them of his adventure. Bob was lavish in his praise; but Two-Gun thought he could detect a twinkle in the blue eyes of his son-in-law. Sternly he forbade him ever to mention the subject again, in his presence or otherwise.

Presently Bess appeared in the door of his room with a message. The sheriff had telephoned that he had some papers for Two-Gun to serve, and in her voice was reflected the pleasure which she knew the summons would give the old deputy.

"Tell him to send somebody else," Two-Gun snapped at her. "I ain't feelin' good."

"Why, pa! What's the matter?"

"I got a—a mis'ry."

"Where, pa?"

"Oh, jest a mis'ry. Don't bother me."

He did not confide to her that the misery was in his heart, even when she came back and dosed him with Perkin's Panacea, which left an awful taste in his mouth.

By Wednesday morning, the day before the *Clarion* was to appear, he could stand the strain no longer so, putting pride in his pocket, he called on Lem Ansley. Slowly, he climbed the steps which ran up on the outside of the frame building, in the second story of which was the home of the newspaper. He found the editor busy over a typewriter.

"Hello, Uncle Two-Gun Pete," Lem exclaimed with that tantalizing grin. "Both the *Clarion* and I are honored."

"Lem," the old deputy said, "I come to ax a favor. I want you to leave me out of what happened Monday night. The sheriff an' the constable made the arrests, anyhow. Jest don't mention me at all."

"Why, Uncle Pete, it's the first chance of my life to write a really big story. And you are the central character—the hero, you might say. Where did you get that nightshirt?"

"Maybe you don't realize what you're doin', son," pleaded the old man, "but you are gradually drivin' me off the streets of the town. Folks call me Two-Gun Pete. I feel honor at the name, kase I've earned it, you mought say. But the jim-cracks you are always shootin' at me in yo' paper has led some to call me Open-Minded Pete. An' when they call me that they're pokin' fun, kase I do my duty accordin' to my own lights. When the *Clarion* comes out tomorrow, tellin' how I was runnin' around befo' wimmin folks in my nightshirt with a squirt-gun in my hand, well, I won't be able to show my face again. I wouldn't have had the blamed thing ef I hadn't busted my toe agin it."

The editor had been gazing moodily out of the window. Now he turned, laughing.

"It was lucky you did. Now get out of here, Uncle Pete. That's going to be the biggest story of my life, and I haven't even begun it. Where did you get that nightshirt?"

* * *

IN A hopeless apathy old Two-Gun moped in his room. The *Clarion* was always delivered by carrier to the subscribers in town on Thursday mornings. He dreaded its appearance this time as one doomed to death must dread taking his seat in the electric chair. Because of Lem's persecution, he would not read the paper. But this morning Bess appeared in the door of his room with a *Clarion* in her hand.

"Pa," she exclaimed excitedly, "Lem's got the story about you spread all over the front page. There's a picture—"

"Git out of here with that thing!" Two-Gun stormed at her, leaping from his chair.

"But, pa—"

"But me no buts. Git! Git!" Bess turned and fled.

Immediately an ominous calmness came over Two-Gun. Hastily scribbling a note, he placed it on the dresser where Bess would find it when she came out later to sweep and tidy his room:

> I've gone to shoot me a skunk. You'll find me in the jailhouse.

Then, for the last time in his career, the old deputy buckled on his six-guns.

When he emerged upon the street, it seemed to him that almost every one had a *Clarion* in his hand. Merchants stood in front of their stores, reading it. They called to him, asked him to stop, wanted to talk about what they were reading. But he paid no attention —in fact, through the drumming in his ears, scarcely heard them. His eyes fixed straight ahead, his small body bent forward, he shuffled along in a sort of half trot.

Lem reclined in a chair, his feet on a littered desk. The smoke of a strong briar pipe curled about his head. Pausing just within the door, Two-Gun jerked at his pistols. He could not remember when he had last had them from their holsters, and they were difficult to release from the hardened leather. But now he had them free and pressed against his hips. Crouching, he crept toward the surprised editor.

"Lem, you're a-goin' to die!"

Lem had hastily drawn his feet from the desk and laid down his pipe.

"Uncle Pete, have you gone crazy?" he exclaimed, starting to his feet.

He looked into the determined old eyes, bloodshot from sleeplessness; he noted the twitching lips, the trembling hands. But no matter how much the hands trembled, they kept the muzzles of the six-guns directed squarely upon him. His face went white. He backed across the room until he brought up against the wall.

"Ef you've got any prayin' to do, you better git started. When I counts to three you're a-goin' to die."

"But tell me what it's all about, Uncle Pete. Give me a chance."

"You had yo' chance. I axed you not to put me in that there story. I'm a'goin' to start countin', Lem."

Suddenly a gleam of hope came into the editor's eyes.

"Have you read the story?" he asked.

"No!" Two-Gun exploded. "An' that ain't all—"

"Then in fairness to me, in fairness to yourself, because you have always judged things with an open mind, read the story before you shoot me."

Two-Gun stood considering this. Then:

"All right, Lem. But you stan' there agin the wall, an' ef you so much as wiggle a finger while I'm a-readin', it'll be yo' last wiggle."

Placing one of the guns on the desk, he picked up the latest edition of the *Clarion*. The first thing he noticed was a picture of himself, seated stiffly in

Sunday clothes, which Bess had made him have taken years ago, a copy of which, done in crayons, stood on an easel in the parlor. Then he began to read.

Still reading, he sank into a chair and placed the other gun on the floor beside him. When he had read the last word, he looked up at the editor.

"Lem," he said judicially, "you got some things in here that didn't actual happen."

"That's what makes a real story, Uncle Pete," Lem said, coming eagerly forward. "The things that didn't take place but which, under the circumstances, might have happened."

"Why, you've made me a regular dadblamed hero. 'Single handed and armed only with a spray-gun. In the face of gunfire.' An' you didn't even mention the nightshirt."

When, flushed and panting, Bess appeared in the door, the note clutched in her hand, the two were bending over a copy of the *Clarion,* spread on the desk. Two-Gun's arm was draped affectionately over Lem's shoulder. Silently she crept away.

On Sunday morning, Two-Gun came in from his milking to find Lem seated in the kitchen, drinking coffee. On the table before him was spread a section of a big city paper.

"I told you it would be the biggest thing I ever wrote," he greeted the old deputy. "They've copied it word for word and put in the picture. And think how near you came to shooting me," he added reproachfully, "without giving me the benefit of your open minded judgment by first reading the story."

"Why, Lem—" Bess laughed—"pa wouldn't have shot you. He couldn't have. I unloaded those guns years ago, for fear the children might get hold of them."

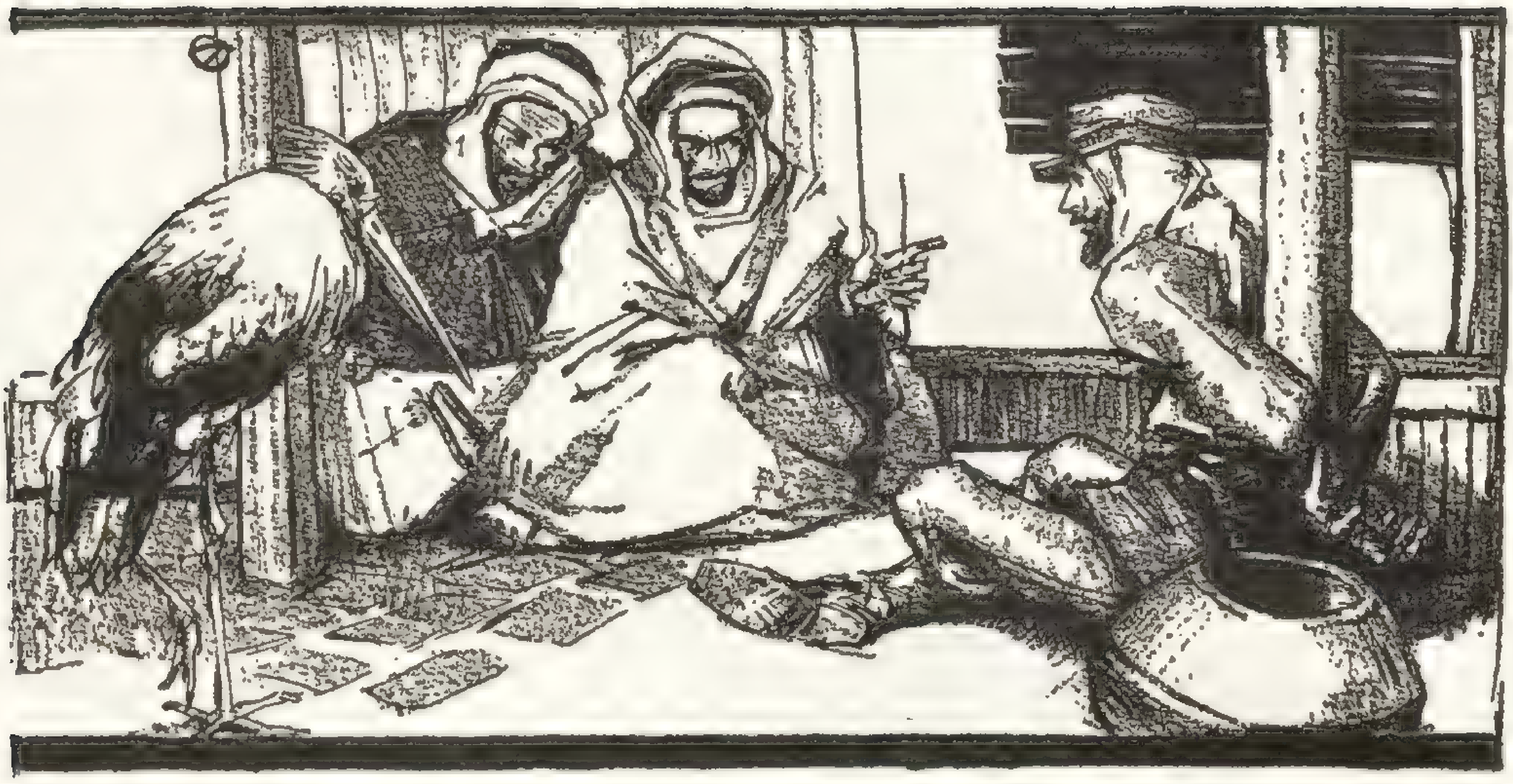
To hide his surprise, Two-Gun supped most noisily as he drew the coffee into his mouth from the saucer. But he almost strangled. Lem turned on him with a sheepish grin.

"Do you mean to say that you scared me nearly to death with empty guns?"

"Why, y-yes, Lem. Them guns was e-empty. Ha-ha-ha!" Then the forced laugh turned to real mirth. "But you sho was scared, Lem. He-he-he! Mortal scared!"

"If you ever tell that on me, Uncle Pete, I'll have to leave town."

"Looks like me an' you was sorter at quits, Lem. He-he-he! An' from now on for me it's goin' to be 'single handed an' alone.' I don't need no guns. 'Specially empty guns," he added with an accusing glance at Bess.



Khyada

A Story of the Foreign Legion

By GEORGES SURDEZ

IT WAS after the storming of the Moroccan village of Khyada, in the Middle Atlas, that Sergeant Stoeckel acquired his most famous pet. But long before that, the Legionnaires of the Second Foreign Regiment of Infantry had boasted that Michel Stoeckel had a way with animals, and had told countless stories to prove his rare power over them.

"Ever hear of Grenadier? That was his first poodle in the Legion," a graying private would start. "There was a dog. Knew all the bugle calls, could hide his feelings better than most human beings. And you could always tell when an officer was coming. Grenadier had a special bark for officers."

Then another man would mention Bico, a jackal which Stoeckel had captured, tamed and trained while with the mounted company in the Sahara. Bico would ride on a mule, perform all the ordinary tricks taught dogs. But once in awhile, the nostalgia for the wide open spaces would grip him and he would vanish for weeks, to return to the company wherever it had moved in the meantime.

Thus far the star of Stoeckel's numerous collection had been a tame boar by the name of Hanseli, owned by the sergeant at Gerryville in Algeria—principally because Hanseli was connected with one of those enormously comical episodes which become barrackroom classics. He had frightened a general's horse during a parade.

"That nag just took one look at Hanseli, sniffed and put his head between his knees. The Old Man came sliding off, landed with a thump. You can call me a liar—although there are many still around who saw it as I did—if Hanseli didn't rush forward and poke the general in the stomach, the way Stoeckel had taught him to play."

"What was done about it?"

"Nothing officially. The Old Man knew that the more fuss he made, the funnier the story would be. But Hanseli was found dead a month or so after, shot by mistake, the officers said. Just the same, they never said who made the mistake. Stoeckel is sort of funny about his animals and he might have made a mistake himself."

Stoeckel's reputation was so firmly established that officers sometimes sent young dogs to him for training. Legionnaires who were ambitious to emulate him, and those who were merely curious, would gather to see the first meeting. The sergeant was a rather tall, dark skinned man of thirty-five, not at all unusual in appearance, yet something about him inspired animals with confidence. The new dog would come, slowly, diffidently, but he would come.

Stoeckel would hold out his clenched fist, allow the puppy to smell it at leisure. This was evidently a sacred gesture, for his expression was absorbed, tender, intense. Slowly he would open his hand, touch the dog's head with the tips of his fingers, lightly at first. Then after the usual scratching behind the ears, he would draw him nearer by the skin of the neck.

Once, twice, three times, he would blow his breath gently into the animal's nostrils, laughing softly.

"Now that we're acquainted, come along—"

When with congenial companions, gathered before bottles and glasses, Stoeckel would explain willingly, make his system clear. But others who tried it found themselves bitten in the nose, or rewarded with an enthusiastic flick of a moist tongue full on the lips. The Stoeckel method obviously involved certain particulars not too clear to a man's reasoning.

Aside from this ability to win the affection of animals, Stoeckel was in no way distinguished. He was a brave, sturdy, noncommissioned officer, who obeyed orders like a man deep in a hypnotic trance and expected like obedience from his subordinates. The passion for cleanliness that prevails throughout the corps was a fetish for him. As he was an Alsatian, he was honest of purpose, stubborn and loud.

It was common rumor that his family had cast him off for joining the Legion, and that he had joined because a girl had jilted him. He had barely reached thirty when men started to refer to him as Old Man Stoeckel. This was not because of a weak physique, for he was one of the strongest men in his battalion and owned a solid pair of fists, but because of his mannerisms. A young sergeant of Legion should not lift up a full glass and look at its contents against a light. Only old men suspect liquor.

Strangely enough, Stoeckel had stated, shortly before reaching Khyada, that he would never own another pet. The last, a very smart terrier, had been run over and killed by a staff car, and his master proclaimed that the grief over his death had been out of proportion to the pleasure he had given in life.

"I'm through and I mean it," the sergeant said. "Unless—well, one never can tell. But I don't want anything that'll be on the ground and waiting to be killed. And I don't want any animal that will be hard to take along anywhere. In my twelve years of Legion, I have left five dogs behind. Remember that little pup I had in Syria? I gave her to a captain. He writes me that she still recognizes my name. Cute, all right. But what's the use of having them, if it's only to make them unhappy?"

Perhaps for want of a family interested in him, Stoeckel kept informed as to the various animals which he had owned or trained. The bulk of his mail, aside from tailors' bills, was made up of letters giving him news of his former charges. He kept in his wallet a photograph clipped from a magazine, showing a large shepherd dog he had cared for, in the company of a very handsome woman, the wife of a captain. What revealed his true devotion, a stroke of the scissors had clipped off more than half of the lady's face.

"A prize animal—worth fifteen thousand francs—won a ribbon. Think of that, more than a year's pay. He was sort of a dumb pup, though."

THE taking of Khyada by the Taza mobile group was a pretty operation, carried out according to schedule. The local rebels—they had never submitted to the French, but had owed allegiance in the past to the Sultan—had fought a splendid combat against the head of the column, held on to the village until the artillery dropped a few melinite shells on the flat roofed dwellings.

While the Legion company made for the eastern face of the enclosing wall, a battalion of Senegalese Tirailleurs attacked from the west. Pinched between the two, the defenders had been squeezed out speedily, and fled in the valley below before the pursuing cavalry. Scattered detonations, startling as the last crackling of a spent wood fire, echoed in the distance when Stoeckel, leading the first patrol, entered the village.

He progressed cautiously at the head of his men, crossed toward the marketplace, where he was to meet the Tirailleurs. According to predictions, he saw a group of negro soldiers already gathered there. Their sergeant, a tall, chocolate hued Bambara, introduced himself as Bo Diara. Stoeckel complimented him on his quick advance and sent him back to inform his lieutenant that the Legion had arrived.

The Legionnaires then sought comfortable spots on which to stretch, the majority selecting the deep shadow thrown by a crumbling wall. The fighting had not been extremely exciting, or dangerous, but they had been very active under a strong sun.

They left the problematic loot to be found in the village to the blacks, knowing from past experience that there was small chance of finding anything of value, and that if they did it would be taken from them by the first officer to come up. And while they were permitted to seek food, they preferred their usual ration to what they might discover in the houses. The Chleuh mountaineers had undoubtedly taken with them all the livestock, and it was very unlikely that they had left so much as an egg.

The negroes felt differently. Many small objects, of no worth to white men, they found desirable, as personal adornment or simply as toys. Stoeckel, who had served near the Senegalese often, identified the blacks in the group before him as West Coast natives, good natured fellows, a trifle timid, not wholly at ease in the khaki uniforms, annoyed by the military boots they were forced to wear.

They were exploring the buildings diligently. One of them emerged with a queer, moving, white bundle, which was immediately concealed from sight by the other Tirailleurs, who grouped about the successful looter and chattered loudly. Stoeckel did not understand their language, and lost interest. But the scene bore directly on what followed.

Private Do Fodu, who came from the shore of the Ebrie Lagoon on the Ivory Coast, was puzzled by his find. It was a live bird, but it resembled few birds he knew. Undoubtedly, he had seen others like it since coming to Morocco, but he did not associate his captive with the rest, which he had beheld only from a distance. Although ignorant and primitive, knowing but a few broken words of French, he had elementary knowledge, and understood that what bore feathers was good to eat.

"Yeee! Mo ule Akah," he said, *"ye kah ley ly kokwey!"*

Tirailleur Akah, who had been born two huts away from Do Fodu's home, came nearer as requested. An invitation to eat chicken could not be ignored. But his tattooed face split into a scornful grimace.

"Gna kokwey," he stated. "That's no chicken."

"O'kokwey! Wuro go, na didi," Do Fodu protested, winding string around the fluttering bird's skinny legs. "It's chicken! Comes out of an egg; good to eat."

Private Akah was not taking anything for granted. In a land where horses grew as large as buffaloes and swift as antelopes, where some white men flew through the air and other white men worked at building railroads and served at tables in restaurants, a strange bird might well prove poisonous. When he had come to the regiment, an interpreter had told him that white sergeants were his guardians and would teach him what was good and what was evil. The nearest white sergeant was Stoeckel.

He grasped Do Fodu's sleeve and pulled him across the marketplace toward the Legionnaires, gesturing to attract attention, pointing to his mouth, to the bird and then to his rounded stomach.

"Chicken good to eat, Sergeant?"

The question had an unexpected result. The Legionnaire rose quickly, his face red. It must be recalled that Stoeckel was an Alsatian, therefore considered storks as sacred as did any man in the Middle Atlas. There was something utterly revolting to him in that a man, even a savage, could think of eating a stork.

Before any one could interfere, his massive fist lashed out, smote Do Fodu squarely on his thick lips. The bewildered negro reeled, fell, and the sergeant retrieved the bird. But he had no time to free him. Do Fodu had learned one thing, and that was that no white man should strike a Tirailleur. His comrades came to help him with a rush.

For a moment trouble seemed about to break out, for the Legionnaires had risen and run forward to help their sergeant; a few cuffs were exchanged, and with both sides armed with rifles and bayonets, grave consequences might have come of the incident.

Fortunately, Sergeant Do Diara came back in time to call his men away. After hearing their shrill explanations, he addressed Stoeckel in fairly good French.

"What's the matter? You sergeant, you hit private? No good!"

"Sure, I hit him," Stoeckel shouted. "I'll sock him again, the damned savage! Look what he did to this stork! Why, even the slobs we're fighting wouldn't do that! Storks are sacred, I'm telling you, sacred! And this a little one, a small one!"

"My man says good to eat," Diara insisted.

"Maybe it is—but he can't be touched, don't you hear me? Why, a civilized man would no more touch, let alone eat, one of these birds than he'd eat his father."

Stoeckel had stumbled by luck on the one argument that could convince Diara. Among the Bambaras of the Sudan, men are named after animals, and no man may offend the animal whose name he bears. Diara had been named after the lion. The lion, therefore, was his *n'tene,* his totem. He was a blood brother of all lions, and consequently could not harm any of them. In a flash he recalled that he had seen storks' nests everywhere in Morocco. that they were never molested. And he understood that the stork was in some fashion the white sergeant's *n'tene.*

"I explain that fool quick," he assured.

The Legionnaires could not understand much of his speech, save brief phrases culled from instructors—

"Bunch of slobs—gang of monkeys—lice off coconut-palms."

Diara took breath at last, smiled proudly.

"I fix it fine."

"Thanks, old man," Stoeckel said. He looked at Do Fodu, whose lips were bleeding, and was worried. If the matter were reported he would lose his stripes. He fumbled in his pockets, held out a handful of bronze francs.

"Take 'um—shut up?"

"Shut up too much," Do Fodu agreed.

SERGEANT DIARA then informed Stoeckel that his lieutenant had said that the Legionnaires were to remain in the marketplace, and that the Tirailleurs would keep to the western end of the village. The Bambara pushed his men away, and Stoeckel regretted his fear and his francs when he saw the negro sergeant urge his men along with hearty shoves and free kicks in the slack of their breeches.

But the rescued stork claimed his attention. Carefully he severed the string binding his legs, placed the bird upright. He was about two feet high, with a long, red beak and odd, thin red legs. Seen so near, it was rather grotesque, with baldish face and ruffled feathers. For a moment the stork looked at the Legionnaires, as if puzzled. Then he swung his long neck around, rested his long beak along his back, only to twist back into position with an odd, crackling, loud sound, like two laths of wood slapped together.

"Looks more sore than scared," one of the privates said.

"Sure," Stoeckel explained. "Storks think nobody should touch them. Back home we'd kill any one who hurt one. And the guys around here feel the same. This little fellow was probably knocked out of the nest by a shell explosion, too stunned to fly off. He doesn't understand what it was all about. You never heard of anything happening to a stork before, did you, little one?"

He squatted and caressed the bird's beak with a finger, crooning deep in his throat. The Legionnaires, who knew him well, started to laugh.

"I suppose his mama told him he was sacred, Sergeant—"

"If your mother could talk, his could," Stoeckel snapped. "Can't you see how bright this one is? Didn't try to beat it, did he? Knows he's found friends. Don't you, little one?"

Unquestionably the bird was intelligent. Any one looking into his eyes would have known that. Slowly he stretched his white wings, with the thin fringe of black feathers at the tips, as if to test them. Then, satisfied that he was unhurt, he folded them again deliberately and stared at Stoeckel with intense concentration.

"What do you want, little one?" the sergeant asked.

The young stork strutted this way and that for a few steps, halted before the nearest feet, examined the boots with attention. Then he touched the laces tentatively with the tip of his beak. The private grinned, blushed as if a child had distinguished him.

"He's cute, all right, Sergeant! Never saw a boot before and wonders what it can be." He bent down to stroke the red beak gingerly. The bird moved back, granted him a single glance, passed on to the next man, and examined the boots once more, with the same swift, brief touch of his beak.

"Inspection," said some one. "Next thing you know he'll be handing out punishment—"

"Doesn't he strut like an adjutant, though!"

Stoeckel, as usual, was the first to understand.

"Can't you see he's hungry? He thinks the laces are worms or something—"

Twenty hands reached into twenty bags at once, bringing out morsels of bread, tablets of chocolate, slices of cheese wrapped in greasy rags of newspapers. The little stork considered each offering with deliberation, did not appear to find anything to his taste. The Legionnaires had a moment of hope when he consented to take a bit of cheese in his beak. But this was soon dropped, scorned.

"What do they eat, anyway, Sergeant?"

"Oh, slugs, frogs, snakes," Stoeckel declared. "Fish when they can get it. Guess he'd eat bread when he got used to it." He looked up, helplessly. "Wish I had some meat!"

"Think he'd eat canned beef?" a private suggested.

"Try him—"

A can was ripped open, and Stoeckel, with a very serious face, dug a wad of the red stuff out of the mass, rolled it between his palms into the approximate shape of a large slug. He did not make the mistake that the others had made, did not offer it directly. He laid it on the ground, between twigs, as enticingly as possible.

Before long the stork noticed it and came to a full stop. For a moment he held his head to one side, evidently considering the matter, then made a lunge. The Legionnaires uttered grunts of triumph as the meat slid down the skinny neck.

"You fooled him, Sergeant—"

"The important thing," Stoeckel lectured, "is to make him accept the first bite. After that—watch and see if he doesn't eat out of my hand—"

The stork took the next "slug" off the sergeant's palm, and soon was eating from the tips of his fingers. He proved himself a humorist by pretending to mistake Stoeckel's thumb for meat and pinching it with his beak. A private opened a can of sardines, and the Legionnaires were jubilant when they discovered that the bird would eat them. Their knowledge of natural history was thereby immensely increased.

* * *

"WHAT the devil is this?" said a new voice.

All looked up, stiffened to attention. Stoeckel straightened, sheepish. It was Captain Gormer, commanding the company. He stood with his arms folded across his chest, mustache bristling, and they saw that he was angry.

"Thunder of thunders! Are we before the enemy, or aren't we? I walk upon you, and not a man turns! No sentries—nothing! Who in hell shoved such a worthless gang of cobblers on me? Stoeckel, you'll hear from me, you know. What's all this about?"

"Captain—"

"Shut up! Shut up! Not a word! Do you realize that you wear stripes? That I trust you with the lives of *my* men? If the enemy had counter-attacked, you'd all have been shot down! Stoeckel, have you any sense of responsibility? Are you a sergeant of Legion or ticket collector on a tram?"

"Captain, I—"

"Not a word! Shut up!" The captain wiped his brow, shrugged. "Ah, if instead of me and the company, it had been the Chleuhs! What a picnic!" He gasped, broke off, then cried, "You laugh? You think this funny?"

He followed the glances of the smiling men toward his feet. For the first time he saw the stork standing before him, beak to one side, peering up with insolent curiosity. For a few seconds he held the bird's eyes with his own, as if he expected it to yield to his superior will.

"What's this?" he asked in a milder tone.

"A stork, Captain!"

"A stork, a stork! Naturally, it's a stork! Does it look like an elephant? But where does he come from? He's tame?" Gormer squatted, reached out with some hesitation. "Cute little fellow! Does he bite?"

"Oh, no, Captain!" several Legionnaires answered at once. Information was volunteered in a confused chorus. "The blacks had him—wanted to eat him. Shell knocked off his nest. Eats no bread — no cheese, either — likes canned beef—and sardines—"

The captain looked up in astonishment.

"Sardines? Eats sardines? No?"

The private offered the can of sardines. The officer fed the stork two sardines with his own hand, chuckled. No more than his men was he proof against the atavistic respect for storks. The sympathy of human beings for the tall white birds, started in remotest times, as far back as history carries, swept him.

"What are you going to do with it?" he asked. "Keep it?"

"Well, Captain, it isn't right to keep a stork captive," Stoeckel declared. "But if he wants to stick around, he's welcome. Probably, however, it will stay here. They're home loving birds, storks are. And we have to go on soon."

Captain Gormer perceived the humor of the situation. He pretended to be apart from the general feeling among the group of Legionnaires.

"I fear that if he won't come, we'll have to go without him," he admitted. "The general staff wouldn't consider a request to keep a company here as his guardians."

He rose to face his lieutenant, a middle aged Corsican, with a face as bony as a skeleton's, all tanned hide and grizzled hair.

"I've placed sentries and assigned combat posts, Captain. I presumed—" the officer's voice was shaded with obvious irony— "that the usual routine of safety in the field was to be observed."

"You did right," Gormer assured him. He indicated the bird. "Did you ever see one this near, Landry?"

Lieutenant Landry looked down, and immediately his sullen face pleated into a coaxing smile. His skinny, hairy paw reached out cautiously toward the bird.

"Does he bite, Captain?"

"Bite?" Gormer laughed; the men joined him. "Of course not. Eh, hand me that can. Look at this, Landry—eats sardines—"

IT WAS agreed that the stork should be called Khyada, after his home village. And Khyada either lacked the true instinct of his species, or felt gratitude, for when the company left for the north, he followed. By general consent, Stoeckel became his official owner and caretaker. But all took a keen interest in the new mascot.

Stoeckel was satisfied. He had wished for a pet that would not be run over by staff cars, for a pet that could follow him anywhere. Khyada fulfilled the requirements. Very soon, he put all speculation as to his ability to fly at rest. He knew how to fly, and flew.

Still better, he grew in knowledge of Legion habits with amazing speed. Because he was mute, as all storks are, many of the Legionnaires believed him deaf as well. They pointed out how hard it was to startle him with noises. Nevertheless, he must have had some perception of sounds, for he learned the meaning of bugle calls, learned to come to Stoeckel's whistle, when he chose to obey. Khyada was very independent of character, refused to be made a mere toy. He had no patience with those who teased him, and walked away from the major.

The whole company was proud of Khyada, for strangers halted in astonishment when the white bird dropped out of the sky beside Stoeckel. He would walk by the sergeant for miles, lifting his webbed feet rhythmically, bobbing his long neck jerkily.

It was feared at first that he would join his kind as soon as other storks were encountered. And it turned out that in spite of their many admirable qualities, wild storks lack that of tolerance. Whether they were merely inhospitable to a stranger or deemed Khyada something of a renegade, they refused to hold conversation with the tame bird. Khyada, young and doubtless ignorant of traditions, tried to invite himself to gatherings met on the way to Taza, and was ignominiously beaten off, returning to the Legion with his feathers ruffled, wings and tail ragged.

However, he passed off these incidents as a trifling matter of routine, preened himself, clapped his beak once or twice in disgust. He grew rapidly, for he was crammed with food.

Khyada sought nourishment for himself and was capable of existing on his own resources, but the Legionnaires insisted on helping him. Men left the ranks to dart into the rough grass to pick up slugs and snails. The fishing details sent down to rivers or brooks during the halts brought back messes of tiny fish. And even with natural food in plenty, the stork preserved a perverted taste for canned beef.

He knew well when food was served, and would rush for a mess-kit with the speed of all new recruits. Legionnaires learned to cover their stew with one hand when Khyada came near. For although the stork was generally popular, no one but Stoeckel cared to have his dish explored by the long, red beak used to pick up less savory things from the side of the road.

The company had the normal proportion of practical jokers and dullards found anywhere, men who would have been willing to experiment with Khyada's insatiable, undiscriminating appetite. But this proved a dangerous amusement.

Stoeckel caught a private offering his pet the stub of a cigaret, lighted. Without taking the time to remove his chevrons, he gave him such a licking that others were careful from then on. Although there were fifty witnesses to the scene, including Lieutenant Landry, nothing was said, nothing was done. Exceptions exist to strictest regulations.

The sergeant had been due for leave at the end of the operations, but refused to accept it. Moreover, feeling that Khyada would be more at ease in a small place than in a large center of population such as Taza, he applied for and obtained service in an isolated outpost.

There Khyada received many hints to make a nest for himself. A cartwheel on a mast was hoisted, supplied with tempting heaps of raw materials. But, being either lazy or overcivilized, the stork preferred to room with Stoeckel. The sergeant yielded to this flattering preference, placed a shallow box filled with straw and grass in the bird's favorite corner, and their companionship was not interrupted even at night.

Stoeckel was somewhat ridiculous, but accepted chaff with good nature. Khyada objected to lights at night, expressing his feelings by clapping his beak resoundingly. So the sergeant learned to undress and go to bed in complete darkness.

"What's the use of bothering him?" he explained. "Lights just make him nervous the next day and he's off his feed."

He bore with endless patience the demands of the bird. Khyada did not like to have the door closed during the day, as he liked to enter and leave as he chose. As the door of the room opened directly into the yard of the outpost, through which sick natives passed to reach the doctor's quarters, this open door was a challenge to the light fingered lads.

Stoeckel, for a few days, found it impossible to keep brushes, combs and other small articles. Then two blankets were stolen. The intelligence officer at the post, a gentleman who had served in the hills since the first months of the French conquest and knew more of the mountaineers than they knew of themselves, gathered his agents.

The sergeant never learned precisely what was said, but gathered that information had been given out that the room was in a sense the stork's nest, therefore sacred. The blankets reappeared as mysteriously as they had left, and the thefts ended as soon as it was understood that Khyada, and not the Legionnaire, owned the place.

Compelled by his own respect for storks not to interfere with Khyada's wishes, Stoeckel saw the approach of cold weather with dread. Perhaps his friend would migrate to a warmer climate, as was the custom of his tribe. But Khyada stuck with the company, even after the first snow had fallen in the hills. Evidently the search for food rather than the fear of cold was the reason for migration.

Khyada escorted Stoeckel on patrols as he had in the past. But instead of alighting in the snow, which proved uncomfortable, he took to perching on the sergeant's head or shoulders. This was a sight curious to behold, and natives came from remote villages for the spectacle. The Legionnaire became far better known as *Bu Laklak*—the Stork Man—than under his own name.

Stoeckel undoubtedly understood Khyada, just how no one might guess. The fact was that if the sergeant stated that the stork wished the door opened, Khyada would go out as soon as it was opened. If the man said that Khyada was hungry or thirsty, the bird would eat or drink.

But the general opinion was that he either deceived himself or was a deliberate liar when he attributed definite feelings of loyalty, and even a certain dose of homely philosophy, to his winged companion. All could perceive that Khyada did not like a certain officer. The unfortunate fellow was never granted a bit of attention, saw his humble offerings of food scorned. Nevertheless, this did not prove beyond question that in thus acting Khyada proved that he had embraced a feud of long standing between the fellow and Stoeckel.

All believed that Khyada knew the Legion uniform and made friends with Legionnaires more readily than with members of other units—with the exception of Spahis, of whom Khyada was fond, as all good Legionnaires should be.

From the start, Khyada had been honorary member of the company. After six months, it was decided that he could be promoted to corporal, and a special badge was fixed by the tailor to pass around his neck. But the stork had no military ambition, stubbornly refused to wear the emblem of his new rank. By common consent, it was recorded officially that "Khyada Stork, Corporal, was returned to the ranks as second class private, having surrendered his stripes voluntarily."

WITH the return of good weather the company was assembled and joined the Taza mobile group once more on its march south.

Khyada readapted himself swiftly to life in the field. He had grown much stronger, had developed an adventurous spirit. Seldom did he walk beside Stoeckel as formerly, but kept on the wing most of the time. He would vanish for hours, returning as a rule with a flight of wild storks in hot pursuit. His human comrades accused him of appalling sins and greeted him with loud cheers.

Men flow like a stream through the various units of the Legion, and the recruits in the replacement drafts from Algeria arrived ready to admire Khyada, of whom they had heard from Legionnaires on leave. Letters were mailed to the four corners of the world, telling of his cleverness, and there were few members of the company who did not desire to be photographed with the stork.

Khyada had acquired a multitude of minor tricks, which revealed a certain intelligence and thought. He was an interesting example of the effect of constant human companionship on a wild bird. The company would have yielded its small fanion as readily as Khyada.

A young staff captain fresh from Rabat, assigned to the mobile group with the Geographical Mission, discovered this loyalty of the Legionnaires to his dismay. He was a handsome man, dressed well, rode decently, and had been popular with every one. But he had one unfortunate idea, and sent for Stoeckel during a halt.

"I'm told you own that tame stork."

"I take care of Khyada, yes, Captain."

"How much will you take for him, Stoeckel?"

"Can't sell him, Captain. Belongs to the company."

"Can you use a few hundred francs?"

"The men wouldn't let him go, Captain."

"You can see that he vanishes—quietly."

"No, Captain."

"Sit down," the officer invited. He offered the sergeant a drink and a cigaret, assured himself that no one was listening outside the tent, resumed, "I know you are fond of that bird. But as you let him fly freely, sooner or later you'll lose him. He'll mate. Or you may be transferred where you can't take him. A friend of mine in France, who owns a large private aviary and studies birds, has heard of your pet. He wants him. I am ready to spend five thousand francs."

"Sorry, Captain. Nothing doing."

"Think, Stoeckel."

"I have no right to sell him even if I wished to."

"You're afraid of displeasing the men. All right, I'll arrange that with them, offer them a part—"

"I wouldn't try that, Captain," Stoeckel warned hastily.

"Why not?"

"They're queer that way, Captain."

"We shall see, friend."

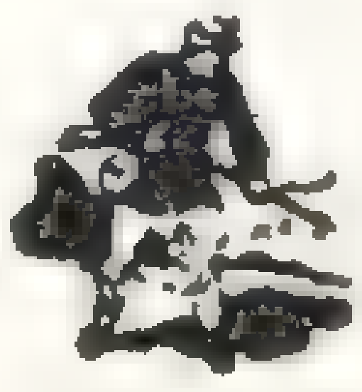
It has been said and written that a Legionnaire will sell anything for the proper amount. This is justified, in a way, because the majority of men in the Legion are by inclination mercenary when they arrive. They serve, frankly and openly, for food, clothing and shelter. Legionnaires have been known to sell uniforms, equipment, even weapons for money to carouse. But they have definite limits unknown to outsiders. Inexperienced officers who have tried to bribe their men have had unpleasant experiences.

The staff captain spoke to a few Legionnaires, probably offered money. He met with no success, and his popularity was wiped out overnight. His orderly, a Legionnaire, quit him to return to the ranks. The officer found his blankets wringing wet at night. The soles of his riding boots, stitches slashed, dropped off the uppers. His trunks vanished mysteriously from the baggage cart.

Captain Gormer was consulted, and admitted that his men had done the damage, in all probability. But an inquest yielded no result. Therefore, the staff captain went north with the first convoy of wounded and sick to leave the mobile group. To his great credit, once away from his tormentors and certain that his gesture would not be mistaken for a plea for mercy, he wrote Sergeant Stoeckel a letter of apology.

This episode strengthened Khyada's prestige.

"That stork? We refused five thousand francs for him!"



CONTACT had been established with the enemy, and the first skirmishes started. In the open, the mobile group could have smashed the natives with ease, for they were numerically inferior, at most eight hundred rifles. But fighting their own kind of war, in a maze of hills and valleys, the mountaineers were dangerous foes.

Those who have followed military expeditions in North Africa have seen storks remain on their nests during artillery bombardments. Whether inspired by ignorance, natural courage, or long immunity to harm, the birds are brave. Khyada showed the same scorn for danger. Rifle firing excited him, but he felt no fear.

This presented a new problem for Stoeckel. If left free, the bird followed him everywhere. While neither the hillmen nor the French troopers would have fired upon him purposely, stray bullets respected no one. Khyada, it was evident, must be kept away from the front lines. And this was more difficult to achieve than expected. The stork would struggle against a chain or a cord fastened to his leg, dash about inside a crate or a box, and risk injury to obtain freedom.

The Legionnaires with the ammunition train could not watch him during a combat, having much work to do. Stoeckel arranged with a sergeant of the ambulance corps to keep Khyada in an unused tent at the rear whenever trouble was expected. This system worked well several times.

Then came an important engagement. The French faced four hundred-odd riflemen determined to make them pay for further progress. Early in the action, because it was known that the mountaineers would fight long, a section of Senegalese Tirailieurs was rushed too far in a first rush and, while momentarily isolated, was cut to pieces.

Eighteen wounded negroes were taken to the dressing station at one time, and the tent in which Khyada was confined had to be thrown open to receive the overflow. The stork immediately strutted out, dodged his guard and, after peering about inquiringly, suddenly took wing and vanished toward the front.

Stoeckel was with the section thrown as a screen between the beaten blacks and their assailants. Encouraged by their first success, the Chleuhs were truculent, hard to hold. As usual in that region, the men were accompanied by many women and children, who followed close behind the warriors to reload rifles and finish the wounded invaders. In this sector of the field, the whole swarm of natives had merged, both sexes and all ages, drunk with rage. They charged repeatedly straight at automatics and machine guns.

The screams of women and children had at first an unnerving effect on the Legionnaires. The training of centuries was hard to forget, although a blade wielded by a gray haired woman, a heavy stone flung by a boy in his early teens, could do much harm. Placed between chivalry and death, the soldiers protected themselves as best they could.

The hill people had given up massed attacks, and came in small groups, crawling through the brush and darting from cover unexpectedly. Stoeckel, like the others, was bewildered and sickened. His first humane impulse had been rewarded by a severe bite through the fleshy part of his calf. His face was scratched, his hands lacerated.

He was kneeling beside a machine gun, directing its fire, when a shadow flitted over his head. He paid no attention at the time, for his eyes were on a clump of bushes from which trouble might be expected.

"Point blank, to the left—to the left."

At any cost, he wished to avoid close quarters. He remembered too clearly the impact of butts on the crawling, clawing foes who had to be finished off like writhing snakes. For if the mountain people grant no mercy, they accept none.

The shadow flashed overhead again, then suddenly Khyada alighted a few feet away. The prevailing excitement did not please him, and he twisted his neck, rested his beak on his back and started his disapproving clapping. The sound was oddly clear through the fusillade.

"Beat it," Stoeckel pleaded.

He waved his hand menacingly, trying to warn the bird away. Unluckily, this gesture reminded Khyada of a game which the sergeant had painstakingly taught him, a sort of sham battle. He accepted the challenge, ruffled his feathers, came forward solemnly.

He stepped aside, dodged, darted in, and tried to perch on his friend's shoulder.

A stork is not very heavy, but with moving, half spread wings, the bird formed an obstacle to clear vision when vision was most important. Stoeckel brushed him off angrily, cursing him, cursing the ambulance man who had allowed him to escape. The fellow should have known that the fearless Khyada would fly about until he located his usual companions.

"Beat it—eh, left. Left, that's it! Don't let them come out! You, go on —beat it!" Stoeckel picked up a lump of dirt, tossed it at the bird. Khyada watched him gravely, ducked, hopped forward.

With the women shrieking not far away, with the hammering of the machine gun in his ears and his responsibility gnawing at his brain, Stoeckel almost wished something would happen to the stupid bird.

"Go away!"

As has been said, Khyada's virtues did not include absolute obedience. The tumult, the shouting, the shots, puzzled him, and he could not comprehend his friend's behavior. He hesitated, weighed the situation, and made for Stoeckel's shoulder once more.

Again the sergeant brushed him off. The rest happened in a fraction of one second. The Legionnaire realized his error instantly, but could not prevent the accident. Khyada, bewildered by the unexpected violence of his master's movements, hopped off, but instead of springing to the ground, he made for the barrel of the machine gun.

The weapon had been firing constantly for several minutes, and the steel tube was consequently red hot. Khyada would burn his feet severely, perhaps be crippled for life. But there was no time to stop him.

His webbed feet had touched the metal, his beak flew open, and he was away in a flash of white wings. The startled gunner had released the trigger, there was a brief pause, then the belt resumed its progress. Helper 1 kept on feeding the cartridges, but No. 2, who had some leisure, leaned and examined the barrel closely. He turned to Stoeckel.

"Left no meat; not hurt much!"

Stoeckel was relieved. He had seen seared flesh sticking to a machine gun barrel before. Later, when the enemy had left and the weapon was cool, he ran his fingers over the smooth steel. Nothing adhered to the cylinder; therefore Khyada was not crippled for long.

The machine gunners laughed.

"Had a good lesson, though; hasn't been around since. Say, wasn't he funny when his beak flew open? He can't talk, yet nobody ever heard any one swear plainer than he did just now!"

"I'm afraid he's sore," Stoeckel said seriously.

He obtained permission from the captain to leave the front, ran all the way back to camp. There he was informed that Khyada had not returned. He panted as he trotted to the company— the stork had not shown up.

"He'll be back before night," Gormer consoled the sergeant.

"I don't think so," Stoeckel grumbled. "He looked awfully queer as he left. You could see he thought I'd knocked him on that hot barrel on purpose."

"Bah! If he can think as you claim, he knows better."

Twilight came, briefly; night fell, and Khyada was not back. Stoeckel paced through the encampment like a madman, trying to locate some one who had seen his bird. Several times he was near tears when he thought of Khyada, suffering somewhere, alone, and believing his friend had harmed him deliberately.

"He'll be here tomorrow," Gormer insisted.

Day broke and Khyada did not come.

The Legion company marched on with the Mobile Group the next morning. For several days, whenever a lone stork winged across the sky, Stoeckel would rush out into the open, waving his arms, whistling. But each time the bird passed over without hesitation, and no one could be sure he had been Khyada.

A week passed; another—and to all save the sergeant the stork became a vague memory, the subject of a rapidly growing legend.

SERGEANT STOECKEL crashed through the bushes and came upon a combat group huddled behind its automatic rifle. He was out of breath and fell headlong. The Legionnaires were not firing, for they had nothing to fire at. They were plainly nervous, as if they already had sensed that the company was retreating behind them.

"Where's the lieutenant?"

"Landry? Oh, somewhere that way." The corporal rose to his knees, gestured toward the left. That was a slope, rising from the floor of the ravine, a slope tufted with clumps of shrubs already vague in the nearing twilight.

"All right, Grizia. I'll find him. You fellows beat it and join the company. We're reforming near the main trail, and the Senegalese are coming up in support."

"This is a hell of a mess," a Legionnaire said.

"Who asked you?" Stoeckel challenged. "Go on, beat it."

The gunner rose calmly, folded the stumpy front support of his automatic against the shaft, while the feeders picked up empty magazines without haste.

The riflemen and grenadiers had trotted back already, and were waiting some yards away, facing the bushes. Corporal Grizia, large and swarthy, laid his wide hand on Stoeckel's sleeve.

"Coming with us, Sergeant?"

"No, I must find the lieutenant."

"You're crazy! He's dead and the guys with him also."

"You are sure of that?"

"Well, they stopped firing suddenly, and there was a lot of yelling soon after."

"I have orders to find him and tell him we're beating it to reform on the trail."

"Hey, Corporal! What do we do?" the gunner called, halted some distance from them.

"Get back to the company. I'm sticking with the sergeant. All right, Stoeckel, we'll have a look."

"You're crazy," Stoeckel said in his turn.

But Corporal Grizia started toward the left at the trot, and Stoeckel followed him. It would have been a waste of breath and time to argue now. Grizia was stubborn at best.

From the start this engagement had gone from bad to worse. Stoeckel did not understand why, and it was doubtful if any one else did. The onslaught of the mountaineers had come as a total surprise, this late in the campaign, and rumor was spreading that they had been reenforced by contingents from the southern slopes of the Middle Atlas, around Ait-Yakoub.

The two ran in silence for a few minutes. In the distance, guns were discharged, automatic rifles hammered, men were shouting. But this corner of the field was strangely silent. The boots of the Legionnaires squashed loudly in the streaks of softer soil, the hobnails ground against pebbles.

"Look," Grizia said, halting.

There were four corpses, half nude natives still clutching their rifles. The wounds showed black against their brown hides.

"I remember these; our gun got them," the corporal went on. "See, the others haven't come this far. No one picked up the guns. The lieutenant and his groups were somewhat farther, over there—ah!"

Scattered around a litter of empty shells from an automatic were the bodies of four Legionnaires. The weapons had been collected, the men searched and mangled. A fifth body was located face down in a clump of bushes.

"Group 5," Grizia pointed out. "All dead! I told you so. What's the use?"

"Listen, I have to be sure," Stoeckel protested. "We're safe enough. The fight is swinging wide of here, toward the trail." He cupped his hands and shouted, "Oh! Legion! Lieutenant Landry! Lieutenant!"

"Yell away," Grizia sneered. "He's dead."

"I must be sure, must report to Gormer."

They went on until they found another group of dead Legionnaires. They walked as in a nightmare. They were tired, tense, and the silence unnerved them. The sergeant whistled between his teeth, and Grizia snapped his fingers.

"Getting pretty late," Grizia said.

"All right." Stoeckel gave up suddenly. "Guess he's dead. Let's get back."

They turned back in the direction from which they had come. And they saw rockets streaking the darkening sky in the direction of the firing. The mobile group was massing its units and making ready for the night. They felt forlorn and helpless.

"This is a mess," Grizia grumbled.

"Looks like a mess."

"After those first shots came and the company was ordered into that ravine, I knew it was a mess. I said, 'This is a mess; we're sent right into a mess!' Was I right? Was I?"

"Wish I had found Landry," Stoeckel answered. "The Old Man will be sore at me because I didn't. He said for me to reach all the sections and tell them to fall back to the trail. He'll be sore."

"What do you care? You—"

Grizia slapped both hands to his middle, dropping the carbine he had held. At the same time Stoeckel heard the shot, very near. The corporal slumped, curving over, and slipped to his knees. Then he rested his elbows on the ground and grunted. The sergeant looked about, saw nothing, and bent to speak to his comrade.

"Hurt?"

"Yes—"

"We'll fix that!"

Stoeckel slipped his hands under the wounded man's arms, hoisted him up. Grizia groaned and dropped his head on his chief's shoulder.

"Steady there—"

Grizia's groping fingers sank between Stoeckel's neck and shirt collar, pulled hard, almost strangling him. Stoeckel freed himself with a violent twist.

"Steady. Can't you stand?"

"Hurts me! Let me sit down, will you?"

"You've got to come along. Don't be a fool! Sure it will hurt! But you can't stay here."

Stoeckel swung the heavy body forward, to place one arm under the sagging knees. Then Grizia shuddered again, and the crack of the rifle followed. The sergeant dropped his burden, stretched on the ground, slipping back the bolt of his carbine.

"I don't think you should have come, Grizia."

"Smart to tell me that now!"

"He's still watching," Stoeckel said.

He sought for the hidden sniper, could not locate him. The firing was receding in the distance, and he could distinguish the bugles sounding retreat. He had often imagined this exact situation when he had heard of friends being left behind. Grizia would understand, and perhaps it was wise to cut matters short. "Listen, Grizia, you can't walk. I can't carry you—"

"I know—"

"And I can't leave you alive. It's one or both."

"Right," Grizia admitted. "Just a moment."

"All right."

Grizia started to talk to himself, in a low voice that stumbled over words. Stoeckel could not understand what he said—the corporal was using his native tongue, some Central European dialect

Then he shot himself.

Stoeckel did not look at him again, but nodded vaguely in approval. He groped in his pocket for a cartridge wrapped in a piece of white paper. He had carried it thus for six months, as most Legionnaires did. The last cartridge, the key to freedom at the last moment—few resisted the romantic appeal of this. He placed the special missile in his mouth, and shoved a clip of ordinary ammunition in his carbine. After these were gone he would do as Grizia had done.

He rose and darted to a new cover. The sniper did not fire. All was unreal, the sun had vanished, yet it seemed to Stoeckel that the bushy clearing was bathed in a strong, rose light.

Twigs crackled and leaves rustled inches from his head. At the same time he heard the shot. He was hiding on the wrong side of the bush, with his back exposed to the enemy. He crashed through and whirled around. After scanning the ground swiftly, he fired at a shape pressed against the earth in the open.

It was ten seconds before he realized he had fired on Grizia. That meant that the sniper had circled, if the Legionnaire's body lay between them.

One shot gone.

Stoeckel removed the cork from his canteen, greedily drank the strong mixture of cold coffee and alcohol. This made him feel better and seemed to clear his sight. For he saw a quick blinking, like a tiny mirror being spun. And he knew that this was the shiny steel inside the breech of the sniper's rifle catching the sun as the bolt was drawn back to reload.

Stoeckel fired.

The man was not hit, but he was startled. He rose and scurried, crouching low. And the sergeant dropped him with the next shot. There was no doubt that he was dead, for he remained with his head lower than the body, knees gathered, one arm outflung.

Stoeckel straightened, threw his képi away. It was dark enough by now not to be noticed save by the shining of the leather peak which marks a Legionnaire. The cartridge in his mouth tasted badly, and he wiped it, put it back in his pocket. He was confident now that he would escape. He could crawl through the native lines sometime before dawn.

He went back to Grizia, took some papers from his pockets. Then he walked away, slowly. It was simple. All he had to do was to walk deliberately and refuse to answer questions. There would be many men prowling about looking for bodies to loot, and they would not be very curious about others.

The rockets and the firing guided him well enough. After an hour he knew he was near the lines. At one time he heard a voice he knew, that of a German sergeant, and laughed softly. Nothing had changed in the company—a section could be wiped out, a lieutenant could vanish, Grizia could die, but there remained but one correct way to handle a rifle grenade! He would have a good laugh with that German when they met again.

Then fingers reached for his throat out of the night, arms circled his legs, and he fell. He arched his back, struggled to rise, and was knocked into calm by heavy blows rained on his head.

IT WAS daylight when Stoeckel was led into a village.

He was still dazed, and the first thing he recalled after being struck was climbing up a steep mountain trail. His guards were six Chleuhs, leathery, dark skinned men with beards sprouting from their lean jaws. One of them, who spoke a few words of French, had told the sergeant he was not to be killed at once.

On the whole, his captors had not been unkind. From time to time one of them spat into his face as a sign of dislike. But they had loosened the cord binding his wrists, given him water and food, and as time passed and he proved able to converse haltingly in their dialect, had treated him more or less like a comrade.

Before the village, a horde of women and children came to meet the group. They howled, screamed, threw stones and attempted to reach the prisoner. The guards beat them back with butts and kicks.

Stoeckel noted that many of the women showed lacerated cheeks, and knew this to be a sign of mourning for husband, brother or son. He whistled between his teeth, repressed a shudder. He had known even civilized women wishing to have the slayers of their dear ones delivered to them for punishment, tied hand and foot. No man could ever hope to match the stark cruelty of woman.

In the marketplace they were met by a group of older men, one of them conspicuous by his great age, his height and his dignity of bearing. These bearded leaders squatted in the open and had Stoeckel brought before them.

The sergeant understood the drift of the conversation. These men were discussing whether he should be turned over to the eager crowd, or kept as hostage to prevent the French from bombarding the place with artillery, or by planes.

Occasionally one would rise, come forward to touch his stripes, harangue the others. Stoeckel knew that his cause was losing rapidly. These people were not sufficiently ignorant to believe that the safety of a mere sergeant would influence the invaders. Even had he been unable to understand a word, he would have known how the discussion was going, for when his doom seemed decided, the women would start forward impatiently and fight with the guards.

The very old man would speak sharply, then, and bring about order. Otherwise, he was content to listen to both sides, reserving his decision. He sat gravely, fingering his long white beard, toying with the long rosary on his lap, scratching his chin and his ears.

Stoeckel was not hopeful. Public sentiment was against him, and he was aware that the majority would have preferred immediate revenge upon him to the very problematic advantages to be derived from holding him a prisoner. At any moment the old chap might give a slight sign of one hand, and the ceremony would start.

He had heard such scenes related too often to ignore a detail. He was afraid, physically afraid, so afraid that his muscles were inert, lifeless. Had his hands been free, had he had a chance to run, he doubted if his legs would carry him. But there was a job before him, and he steeled himself to carry it through decently.

His terror must not be revealed. He must give his tormentors as little amusement as he could manage. If possible, he must not cry out, must not moan. He would have preferred to be less heroic, to be safe elsewhere, but he intended to do as well with the present situation as his courage permitted. He was a Legionnaire.

But his eyes—his eyes would be the first to go. These people knew that a man's agony was intensified if he suffered in darkness, if he knew, no matter for how short a time, that he would never see again. He cringed, feeling in advance the pressure of nails upon his pupils, the pain stabbing through to his brain. What would happen afterward did not matter. But his eyes.

He gritted his teeth, lost interest in the discussion. He looked at the houses, at the brilliant blue sky. And his mind leaped across intervening years to other houses, to another, milder sky. He saw the tawny sun striking against the barn, golden against the weatherbeaten, grayish planks. The sun caught the surface of the water in the big trough, and big drops sparkled from the soft, moist nostrils of horses when they lifted their heads after drinking.

His eyes, the sun, home, a hundred disconnected ideas floated up, things he had seen, things he had heard about, things he had read.

"Jules Verne," he mused. "Michael Strogoff!"

He remembered a scene such as this in that book; recalled how Strogoff had preserved his sight with the tears that came to his eyes when he thought of his mother. He smiled grimly. His tears did not flow readily now. They must not flow. He remembered trailing his bare feet in the thick, warm dust of the road, remembered looking up to see the storks on the church steeple.

There were nests at home, as there were nests here. He looked up, saw the storks on the taller houses, built farther up against the slope.

He recalled Khyada. It seemed a long time now since the stork had flown away. Yet it could not be more than three weeks. Khyada was somewhere in these hills.

Perhaps he was one of these storks. Wild storks did not like him, but if Khyada had come to them and made them understand that he was through with men, it might be that they had forgiven him, accepted him. They all looked alike from a distance, storks did. For instance, that one who had come so near, who had perched on a wall, less timid and more curious than the others, resembled Khyada.

Khyada had loved crowds, excited, shouting crowds. He had drawn near them and watched, as this stork was watching, seeming to understand, to share in the general feeling.

Stoeckel puckered his lips, whistled.

Those about him stopped talking, startled. They followed his glance, then looked back toward him. Then a sort of amazed gasp, a stirring of cloaks, agitated the marketplace.

The bird had risen from his perch and was swooping down. The natives who were squatted stood suddenly, scattered, gesticulating their astonishment. This frightened the stork, who appeared about to fly off. But Khyada changed his mind, as if reluctantly, swooped again, and landed at Stoeckel's feet.

He held his head to one side, peered up along his beak.

The mountaineers returned, huddled close, chattering among themselves, pointing at the bird, then at Stoeckel. What they had beheld seemed a miracle; a stork, from their own rooftops, had come to a stranger, had recognized him. The Chleuhs of the Middle Atlas are Moslems, have adopted the Koran. But among them, as among most hill people, ancient traditions, rooted centuries in the past, remain the law. Storks had been known and venerated before the legions of Rome or the armies of the Arabs churned the dust of the plains below. The love of storks was older than the hatred of aliens.

The old man took a knife from one of the soldier's guards, stepped forward. But Stoeckel understood at once, felt no fear. Perhaps into him also had welled the conviction that he was protected. When the cords binding him were severed the sergeant did not speak a word to the men about him, did not allow himself a single questioning glance.

When he squatted and spoke to Khyada in a low voice, the whispering tone quivered, as much from joy at seeing his friend as from relief from the terrific tension of the past hours. His fate was still undecided, he felt, and should the stork fly off, the momentary truce would be at an end.

But Khyada did not move back; he allowed the man's fingers to stroke his beak, then to pick up his feet one after the other.

"Still sore, are you?"

Khyada twisted his neck, then clapped loudly. When Stoeckel had ascertained that no scar remained on the bird's feet, he straightened to face the old man. And their glances melted in understanding. Across time, from an epoch when man was not aware of race or nation, a common tie had been established, a creed older than printed creeds united the two. On the wooded hills of Alsace as on the stark flanks of the Atlas, men venerated storks.

Very gently the old man touched Stoeckel's shoulder.

"Bu bellarej? Bu Laklak?"

"Wah, yah, Baba!" Stoeckel agreed. "I am a Stork Man. I am a Stork Man, as are all men of my people."

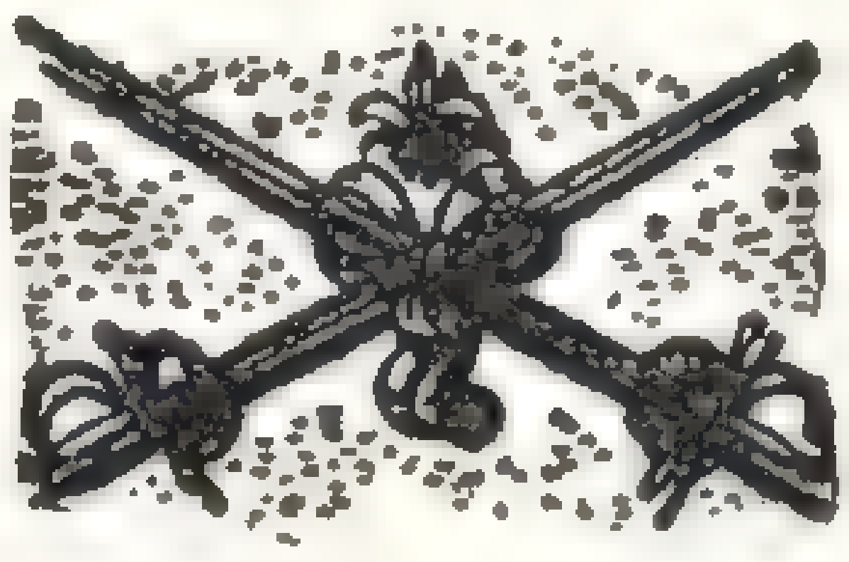
The native leader looked at Khyada, and his dry, blue veined hands moved in a gesture of affectionate benediction. His beard moved, as if he were arranging words for a speech. But he evidently could not make clear what he felt, what all felt. The Legionnaire looked at the circle of faces. There was no longer any show of hatred, any trace of hostility. Even the mourning women were mute, half smiling, and the children watched Khyada with visible awe.

The old man touched one of the warriors on the chest with a finger, spoke briefly to him, then turned to address Stoeckel.

"Go back, *Bu Laklak!* Peace be with thee."

"And with thee, my father," the sergeant said humbly.

And he followed his guide, while Khyada took wing to precede them. Long after the two men had vanished down the steep mountain trail, the crowd in the marketplace watched the white bird protecting his friend.



Sword-Boxing

By JAMES W. BENNETT

THE U.S.S. *Villa Lobos*—once of the Spanish fleet defending Manila—was quiet. Chinese sampans of the bumboat variety circled around and around the squat, venerable vessel, without selling a single banana, Mandarin orange, native grown peanut or packet of Chienmên cigarets. At last in despair, they sculled back to Junktown, that crowded anchorage on Soochow Creek for junks, sampans and barges. Not to be beguiled into petty barter, the skeleton crew of the *Villa Lobos* stared morosely at a distant blaze of lights which was the city of Shanghai. One of the group said in an embittered voice:

"Them lucky bums, gettin' shore leave an' watchin' the Chinese hack each other into mincemeat with swords a yard long! An' us, sittin' out here, twiddlin' our blasted thumbs. We've joined the Navy an' we're seein' the world! Oh, yes, we are!"

The speaker was an excellent prophet. For, at that precise moment, the *Villa Lobos'* shore party was occupying a solid block of seats in the auditorium of the New World Theater on Nanking Road. Around them, also waiting for the performance to begin, were many scores of Chinese, the cream of Shanghai's native sporting fraternity.

A half hour passed. The American seamen began to whistle, to stamp, to clap in unison. They wanted to see the champion sword-boxer of South China begin carving the champion of North China—or *vice-versa*—and they did not hesitate to make their desires known.

The Chinese, with immemorial patience, showed no signs of annoyance at the delay. They cracked and ate the tiny centers of watermelon seeds, squash seeds, sunflower seeds. They drank tea or gargled and expectorated it upon the floor. They lifted brown hands in a signal to attendants lining the aisles, who hurled hot towels with unerring accuracy into those extended brown fingers. After wiping their heads, necks and faces, the Chinese patrons hurled the towels, with equal accuracy, back into the hands of the ushers.

But the curtain continued to remain motionless. It was an advertising curtain, glaring and crude, painted by an Oriental who had all too evidently had a sojourn in America and had visited many burlesque houses. In one corner was drawn a huge, bilious green necklace at the side of which were Chinese ideographs announcing that "Mow Kee of East Szechuan Road sells emperor-fine jade. Price low-unto-bankruptcy". Dominating the canvas was the painting of a rotund Chinese gentleman with leering eyes, drinking from a bottle. Its caption stated: "Best Rice Wine at Tzung Tso's in this building. Its price is a giveaway".

Suddenly the curtain shivered. It began to roll upward, making a shrieking sound like that of a man in mortal agony. It revealed an empty stage; not even a drop curtain masked the brick wall at the rear. Two Chinese, bare to the waist, heavily muscled, came sheepishly to the footlights and bowed. The American sailors applauded with belated enthusiasm, after awaking to the fact that these were the gladiators they had come to see.

A small, ragged, blasé Chinese boy sauntered slowly on to the stage, bearing a pair of swords. The two adversaries took the swords from the boy's plainly reluctant grasp and stationed themselves at either side of the stage. Still sauntering, the urchin disappeared from view.

A man's voice, offstage, gave a signal in Chinese. The gladiators tensed their muscles, lifted their swords and whirled the blades madly in the air. The stage appeared to be full of glittering, whistling steel and of lithe bodies that shuttled back and forth.

Then the blades clanged viciously together. Abruptly the combatants stopped and held the posture, blade against blade. They drew apart, each returning to his side of the stage. Again the signal. Again the bewildering whirl of steel and the shuttle of trained bodies. Again the same finale. As far as the American Naval audience could judge, the pair had not deviated a hair's breadth from their previous motions. But, this second time, a murmur arose from the Chinese spectators and cries of "*Hao*—good!" One of the boxers turned and smiled an acknowledgment.

During the next round, each man leaped from the ground in a step not unlike that of a Russian dancer, whirling completely around in the air before drawing near enough to engage his sword with that of his opponent. Three times this was repeated.

A leather lunged gunner's mate, realizing the futility of speaking in a tongue unknown to the combatants, nevertheless soothed his soul by shouting:

"Ver-ry pretty! But get into it! Get together! A little more of the old tobasco!"

A murmur of approval arose from the bluejackets. One of them called out—

"Try slicing a few ears for a change!"

But ears were apparently safe. Neither contestant had been touched—despite an apparent cutting edge to the swords.

The boxers' next move surprised even the U. S. Navy. When the signal, off-stage, was given, they suddenly fell forward, rolled in a somersault and landed on their feet, sword hilts locking.

"Hao!" shouted the Chinese spectators. "Very good—*ting hao!*"

The gunner's mate made an abrupt clawing motion, as though in need of air.

"Hey!" he shouted. "What sort of phony business *is* this? Is this suppose' to be a fight or an animal act?"

"It's a game of drop the hank-kichif!" came a piping falsetto voice, across the aisle.

"It must be!" agreed the gunner's mate. He cupped his mouth in his hands. "If you two birds don't mix it up pretty quick, I'll come up on that stage and show you!"

A Chinese just behind him touched his shoulder and whispered in excellent English—

"My friend, were you to go up there with a sword, you would last just one moment against either of those men."

"Says you!" muttered the sailor. But something in the Oriental's calmly authoritative tone caused him to ask mildly, "Well, why don't they do a bit of fighting?"

"Because that is not Chinese sword-boxing. Every move they make is—how do you say?—formalized. For hundreds of years our boxing has been done in just this way."

The sailor was puzzled.

"But who wins?"

"The one whose style is the more perfect."

The gunner's mate twisted around in his seat.

"What if one draws blood from the other? Don't that count for anything?"

The Chinese gave the sailor a shocked look and politely explained:

"With our professionals that is never done. I have never seen one swordsman even touch the other. It would be barbarous. Perhaps, yes—with clumsy amateurs. But not with champions. Never."

"Then you mean to say that they're just gonna dance about an' wave their swords?"

Smiling, the Chinese nodded.

"An' how long are they gonna keep it up?"

The Oriental drew back the long cuff of his satin gown. On his forearm was an American wristwatch. He looked at it and answered:

"It is now ten o'clock. By two, perhaps three, one of them will have proved that he is superior to the other. If they are still evenly matched by then, they will fight until morning."

The gunner's mate rose. His face was grim. He said softly:

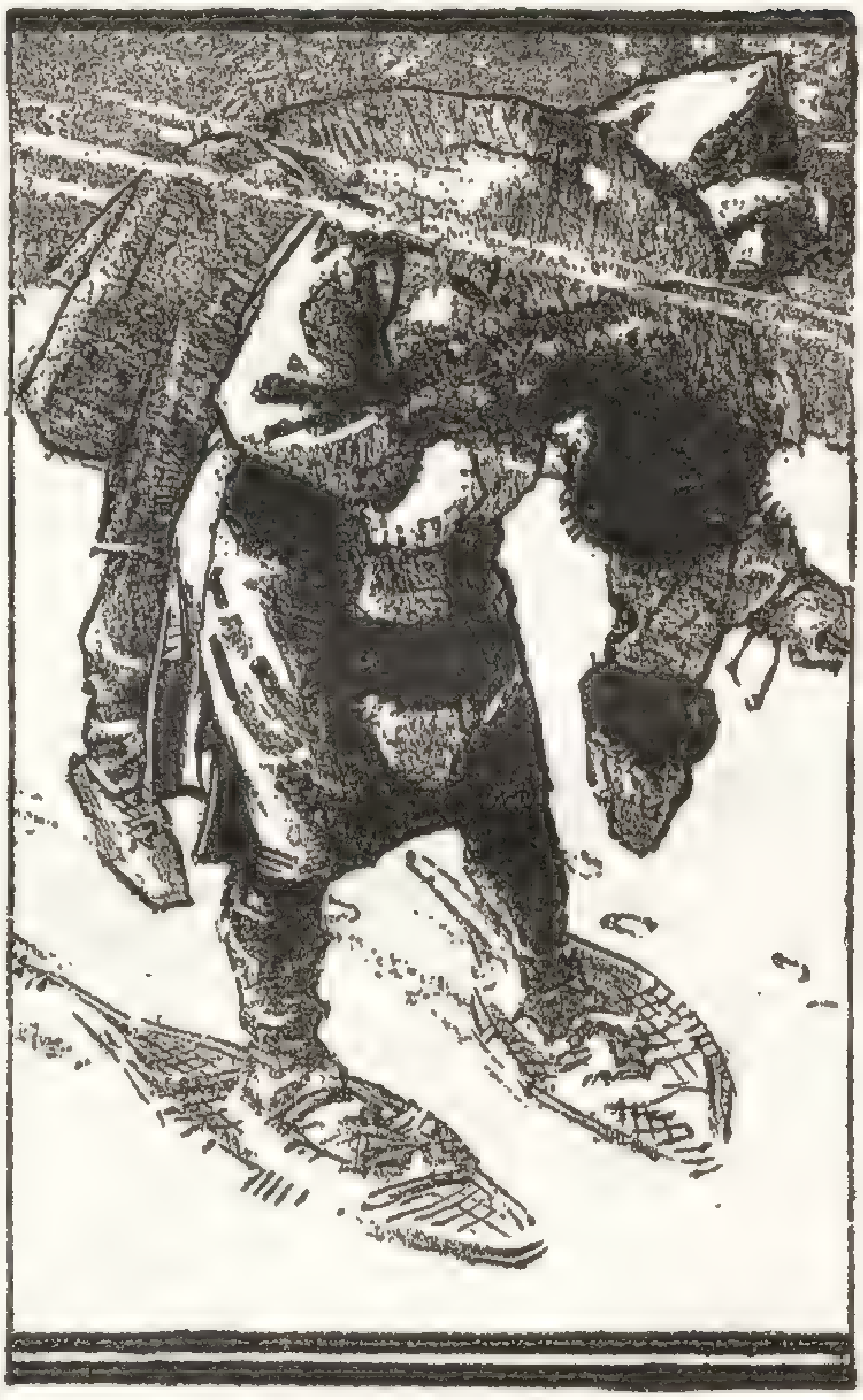
"Well, well! Ain't China wonderful!" His voice lifted to a bellow, "Come on, you punks! This Chinese guy tells me that them two up there is goin' to fiddle about just like this for the rest of the night." He reached forward and shook a sagging blue clad shoulder. "Wake up, buddy; we're goin' to scram. Not 'at I blame you for sleepin' through this lousy show! Who's for goin' back to the *Lobos* with me an' puttin' on a real scrap—six ounce gloves an' bitin' in the clinches?"

There was such a noisy, concerted blue surge toward him that even the sword-boxers on the stage faltered for a moment in their immemorially precise gestures.

The shore party of the *Villa Lobos* left the auditorium, but the Chinese audience hardly heeded their going. The crowd was watching the pair on the stage as tensely as though death awaited the unlucky parry of a stroke. A throng that knew each twist of the wrist, each complicated move—the Oriental spectators, at least, were supremely satisfied.

Continuing

A Novel of Gold Rush Days in the Klondike



YOUNG Ed Maitland, of Boston, shipped out of Seattle in the van of the gold rush in '97. On the boat he struck up a friendship with a Western gambler, who gave his name as Speed Malone. Malone admitted he was an outlaw; and Maitland agreed to a partnership only after the Westerner pledged his word that he would never draw his guns on the law while the two worked together. Malone told Maitland that he was trailing a man who had murdered his partner a short time before in Nevada, and stolen from him a nugget shaped like a clover leaf.

The nugget, Malone went on to explain, had been part of the loot taken from the Overland Express many years before, in which robbery his partner had participated with two other men. The partner, Joe, had split with his fellow highwaymen when he refused to desert a baby girl found wandering alone on the tracks after the Overland had departed. Joe had taken the baby to a nearby ranch, and left his share of the gold to pay for her keep . . .

At Skagway, Alaska, Malone secured jobs for Maitland and himself hauling for a man named Garnet. But the partners incurred the enmity of the trail boss, Fallon, when the latter resented Maitland's friendship with a youth called Pete. Malone suspected Fallon of purposely plying Pete's partner, Owens, with whisky, for some reason of his own.

The night before the haul started across the White Pass, a beautiful camp singer named Rose sought Maitland out. She told him that she could put gold in his way if he would work with her.

"There's a fool in camp who's due to lose a gold mine—that isn't his to lose . . ."

Later, Malone told his youthful partner that he suspected Fallon of having tried to trap them in some way through the singer.

Fallon pushed a hard trail, and many of the weaker outfits were lost at the outset in the treacherous quagmires.

SMOKY PASS

By

AUBREY BOYD

One night the gold seekers pitched camp before a series of muskegs that spelled defeat to many of them. And a delegation of miners, headed by an old prospector named Brent, asked Malone to take charge of the trail, repair it for the general good.

Fallon, hearing of the meeting, came up with his backers.

"The man don't live that can block this trail when my outfit's ready to go through." The camp boss put his hands on his guns and looked at Speed. "I call this man a liar and a horsethief—whatever's his fightin' word—"

No one saw Malone draw. There was a glint in both his hands and his .45's roared. Fallon's weapons were wrecked in his holsters as he drew.

"The trail's barred," Malone said softly in a voice Maitland had never before heard. "And any man that don't agree can signify by callin' me a liar and a horsethief here and now!"

NO ONE seemed inclined so to express himself. Fallon's rage and wonder were so deep that for a moment they checked his voice. Then he summoned his men with a jerk of his head. To the rest he said, as he turned toward his camp:

"I wasn't lookin' for him to shoot, or he'd be dead. And that's a warnin'. When I get ready, my outfit's goin' through that trail."

Speed watched him leave, and then put up his guns.

Brent reached out his hand with a deep chuckle, while exultant voices broke around them.

"That's the fastest gunnin' I've seed since Wild Bill's time," Brent said. "Never even guessed you was drawin' him."

"We've started somethin', Brent," said Speed soberly, "that's likely to have a wild finish. Why didn't you name one of your own men?"

"What's the difference?"

Speed was terse.

"A camp feud." He turned to the

men who were gathering round them. "Fell a barrier acrost the end of the bridge there, boys, and arm it. Brent here will pick out railroad and lumbermen to boss the sections. Tie into this and we'll cut down that four days."

Handling a gang was evidently no new undertaking for Speed. The men were working on the barrier when he rejoined his partner and Garnet.

"Here's your money and winnin's," he said to Garnet.

Garnet smiled and invited him to keep the winnings, intimating that he wouldn't have missed the show for a thousand.

But Speed refused.

"I've got another bet to collect from Fallon," he said moodily, "and if I wasn't plumb locoed I wouldn't of made it. Shows what gettin' curious will do."

The idea of his having escaped a break with the miners' law by taking office seemed to amuse Garnet, but the strategy of the original bet puzzled him.

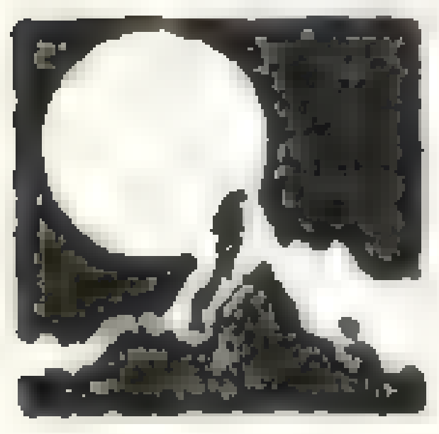
"How did you know Bill would win?" he asked.

"Had a hunch," said Speed.

"The shell dealer looked as if he'd seen a ghost," Garnet suggested. "What scared him?"

"Crossed his wires, I reckon," Speed said remotely. "Well, you're goin' to have a trail, anyway."

As to that, Garnet looked politely doubtful.



IT WAS the third evening after the barring of the trail. Maitland found his partner talking alone with Brent near a roughly bridged crossing at the upper end of the roadwork, which a landslide that day had interrupted.

During three days, new steamers had been pouring into Skagway a mob of adventurers—sweepings of the coast towns as well as *bona fide* prospectors who knew nothing of the cause of the dispute and were not inclined to consider the rights of it. Fallon had been packing them in at Liarsville to vote the trail open; had chosen a posse of gunmen from among the wildest. Before this gathering threat most of the trail workers had given way.

"They's a short string of us will go the limit, if you want to," Brent said.

Speed shook his head.

"It wouldn't be no kind of a break for the boys who made the trail to get hung for it. Tell them to pick up their tools, leave her open and stand clear."

"I've got an old deer gun back to camp," Brent said, shifting the quid slowly in his cheek. "She ain't seed no real action sence she fit a string of hide thieves from a buffalo waller back in '71. I'd ruther shoot her out than see you called that way."

There was acknowledgment in Speed's smile, but he declined the proposal, and the old-timer gloomily withdrew to carry his decision to the few men who were still waiting for it.

"Better trail with him, Bud," Speed said to his partner, "and look up Garnet. We ain't seen him for two days."

"What are you going to do?" Maitland asked, with a foreboding that Speed had not disclosed his real intention.

"We agreed once," said the outlaw, after a pause, "that I'd warn you and we'd split partners if I ever went up against the law. Seems like I've reached that junction, Bud. I'm into this play neck deep and I can't quit."

Maitland gave a sober nod of half comprehension.

"It's on'y my hand Fallon's callin'," Speed explained with more emphasis. "He'll head through here first with his shebang. Either he don't cross this bridge, or I don't live to see it. But he has the backin' of the miners' law, or will have, by sunup."

"Mob law," Maitland amended. "If you don't see your way to quit, Speed, you can't count me out. On principle, I'd—"

The Westerner groaned.

"You ornery Down East Yanks, with your principles and proverbs! Listen, Bud—whether I ever reach Dawson or not don't matter a whole lot; with you it's different. It's what you come for. I've figured Garnet as your chance of gettin' there . . . In Boston, where they keep them hang ropes, what would they say to your bein' hung for an outlaw or shot along with one?"

That last was a deep thrust. But there is no law, East or West, and no tie as strong as that which binds a man to a partner against fighting odds, and with Maitland the bond had been steel woven by the memory of a bleak day in the Sound. Speed here found himself opposing something as elemental as his own refusal to yield.

THE creek had a glacial canyon, with smooth rock faces in the bed, and a timber growth that started well up on the steep banks. Above a defile connecting with the bridge, there was a rocky bluff which commanded a long view of the canyon and of the trail along the rim. Its weakness lay in a broken gulch that fell from it into the creek on the north side, and its possible exposure to gunfire from the hills on the other bank. It would be difficult to take, however, on the side facing the trail.

Here, within a rock corral, some goods lay stacked: provisions, a water canteen, several boxes of shells and a .44 Winchester carbine. The outlaw had evidently foreseen what was coming.

During supper he was broodingly quiet. A blood-red moon was rising through the timber. It lighted the mountain headlands, and left deep shadows, made gloomier by the occasional howl of a timber wolf, or the hoot of an owl. Except for these, and the soft play of the creek waters below, it was the silent setting of a dream. The bridge logs, drowsing in the moonlight, gave a touch of old time poetry to the wilderness of the scene.

"Like Horatius," said Maitland. His voice roused the other from a brown study.

"Hoory which?" The outlaw chuckled when his partner told him the legend of the Tiber bridge. "Some of them old yarns is full of salt," he said. "Reminds me of a ragged book I found once in an empty ranch-house. It was wrote by some old-timer named Bunyan—no relation to Paul, I reckon. Pilgrim father, mebbe. He give out this yarn for a dream, but they was folks in it I been meetin' ever since . . . You read it too?" Speed looked surprised and pleased. "He dreamed of a trail somethin' like this yer—from Garnet's pack and the slough of despondence we been corduroyin', to the Hill of Difficulty we're a-settin' on."

With the words, he picked up the carbine, his eyes on something invisible to Maitland, far up the trail. But presently he set the gun down.

"That's Pete's mare," he said.

A blurred shape moved in the distant timber shadows. When it crossed a lane of moonlight, Maitland recognized the mare and the boy. Guided by a sight as keen as Speed's, Pete came toward them as they descended the bluff. There was something gallant and fine, Maitland thought, about that slight, boyish figure.

On meeting them, Pete gave him a reserved nod; glanced from the bluff to the hills across the canyon and spoke to Speed.

"Need an extry gun hand?"

"I got one too many now," Speed muttered.

"Then, will you let me go through? I could ford the creek," Pete pleaded simply. "That wouldn't be crossin' it on legs."

Speed's eyes rested on the mare's light saddle pack, and then on the boy's face, which looked pale in the half darkness..

"Headin' for Bennett alone?" he asked.

Pete nodded.

"My partner—Bill's dead."

The words gave Maitland a peculiar

shock, and he was silent.

"How?" Speed asked softly.

"I don't know just how it happened. He was in a game—in Skagway. Lost his outfit. He'd been drinkin'. They found him on the beach afterward, drowned."

Speed did not speak for a moment. Then he said—

"How do you aim to make out, kid?"

"There's a man in the Yukon that Bill was to meet on the lakes," Pete said hesitantly. "I'm goin' up to find him."

"Your grub won't carry you far," Speed considered. "Instead of lettin' you through, suppose— We've got a haulin' job for a man who's likely to be shorthanded. Some of his outfit is still in Skagway. Bud will take you back there and fix up something for you with Garnet."

Pete glanced at Maitland.

"It's right kind of you," he said a little stiffly. "Your pardner wouldn't want to do that, though, and I wouldn't want him to. If I don't see you boys again—" the formal tone broke slightly —"I'm wishin' you luck . . . "

He was in the saddle and away before Speed could stop him. The mare shot down the defile at a headlong gallop, took the full span of the bridge in a beautiful leap, and flashed up the hill on the other side into timber.

"The little son of a gun," Speed murmured, ruefully but with admiration. "He's sure worth a gamer pardner than the one he drawed. Funny thing, Bud," he reflected, "how you and the kid don't mix. And I'd lay a bet he likes you a whole lot."

"You'd lose."

Speed shook his head.

"What's the jealous fence between him and you? That woman?"

Maitland did not answer, or quite follow Speed's notion about Rose and Pete. The news of Owens' drowning had given his ideas a different drift. Speed was used to gambling tragedies —seemed to read this one as just the last futile gesture of a drunkard who couldn't take a loss. In his own mind it seemed to connect dimly with the gold secret Rose had spoken of.

But these thoughts were soon suspended in a growing tension at the approach of dawn. His senses tingled warily at shadows and rustlings in the stillness, with an inkling of what the lives of hunted men must be. Speed sat immobile as an Indian until the sky began to silver with the first morning light.

Then, as if he had discounted the likelihood of an earlier attack, he cooked breakfast, quenched the fire embers and began to watch the trail more closely. The silver in the east changed to the ruddy bronze that ushers the far thrown splendor of the Northern sunrise.

A HALF mile to the south the trail came in view over a timbered mountain shoulder. In the rising sun the trees cast long shadows across it, and it was a flickering in the rosy aisles between them that gave the signal.

A team of gray mules topped the rise, shielding the men behind. Other pack animals followed, and their drivers gathered on the vantage ground, peering down the long vista toward the creek crossing. There was a puff of smoke; a bullet whistled over the bluff through the morning silence; then came the sharp rifle crack. Out of the blue canyon mist a great winged, golden eagle rose and soared away.

Maitland observed this through a cranny between the rocks. He never afterward forgot the sense of that moment—the smell of the quenched fire; the breath of damp earth in the shadowed crevice; the pungency of the crisp morning air and the first faint savor of gunpowder.

"Keep to cover," was Speed's only injunction. He held the carbine's muzzle across a saddle of rock, with a box of shells spilled on the ground beside him.

A dozen armed men detached themselves from the group at the head of the slope and, with the two mules and a pack horse, came forward, skirting the timber along the canyon rim, where their guns glinted in the shafts of sunlight. Finding their progress unchallenged, they spread into easier formation, with Fallon's powerful figure discernible in the lead. He did not share the jaunty confidence of his followers. More than once he glanced warily at the bluff above the creek.

At a range of two hundred yards Speed's carbine blazed. The bullet threw up a jet of mud at the feet of the mules. Instantly the line swerved into the timber; a series of white puffs spurted from it, and there was a rattle and smash of bullets against the bluff, which echoed through the canyon like a jack hammer.

Gun smoke and rock dust set Maitland's nerves on edge, while Speed, watching the timber through the haze, automatically slipped a fresh shell into the carbine. A moment later the gun barked again, and a man fell. Not until then did Maitland really feel the grim reality of what was afoot. The attackers moved more cautiously, in sudden changes from cover to cover, or by squirming through the brush. One of them awkwardly pointed a rifle round a tree for a steady sight. Two shots rang as one; the rifle clattered into the brush as the man clapped a hand to his shoulder and slumped out of view.

Then came a noise of breaking brush down the canyon bank and a jostling of rocks in the creek bed. They were trying a new line of advance.

"We're jake so long as they keep in the creek," said Speed. "She flattens out short of the bridge. Unless they can dig past under the near bank— Watch that gulch, Bud." As he spoke he probed the creek bed with a close volley.

The posse still held their fire to avoid betraying their advance and to tempt the defenders to expose themselves. Speed shot out a round and handed the hot carbine to his partner.

"Clean it, Bud, and train it down that gulch. They'll be gettin' into free hand range in a shake." He drew the six-shooters from his belt and inspected them; then raised his head carefully above the rim of the rock corral to get a steeper view.

His eye raked the canyon below for a glimpse of Fallon. Suddenly a bullet went *spang* over the rampart, and he slid back with a grunt, shaking away the blood that oozed from a raw seam above his temple. Smoke was swirling out of some brush a few yards below the point where the trail reached the creek bottom.

"Nobody lied," said Speed, as he tore a handkerchief and tied it around the wound, "when they said this man Fallon could shoot. But I got him placed now."

Changing his position, he edged along the boulders till he touched the outer rim. A bullet hissed between his neck and the rock with an angry spark. Speed fired in the same instant.

"Nicked his gun arm," he said as he whipped back into shelter. "He shoots best left handed."

The words were drowned by a broadside that flattened against the side of the bluff where he had taken cover. He replied from another angle, flashing at the smoke jets. The shooting from below lulled, and then resumed with a furious spatter against the opposite face of the corral.

"Has a kind of funny tune," said the outlaw. "Watch your gulch, Bud."

Maitland, having cleaned the carbine, nosed it over a rock at the head of the gulch. He had never used a gun of such caliber before, not to speak of using it for such a purpose, and he was far from sure of his gifts as a marksman. The curve of the bedded boulder, which was about six feet deep, hid the course of the ravine directly below him. He was about to peer over it when his head almost collided with a hand holding a gun. The hand was reaching for a crevice in the stone.

COMPLETELY forgetting the carbine, Maitland caught the wrist of the hand with a wrenching grip that shook the gun free. One jerk of a powerful arm lifted his yelling captive clear of the rock; then, using his shoulder for purchase, he gave a great heave and flung the man bodily over the rock rim to the face of the bluff.

The thing was so sudden and spectacular that for a moment every gun was still. Speed gaped at the man's figure rolling down the slope and then at his partner.

"By the holy, roarin' whistlin' old jumpin' jingo!" he murmured. "What a throw!"

And then, giving tongue to his enthusiasm in a whoop and a belligerent roar, he emptied both guns into the canyon over the head of the still rolling human projectile, and burst forth in a tuneful and gaudy tenor:

"Young man, take this warnin' and stay if you can
Far away from the Black Hills with your shovel an' pan,
For old Settin' Bull and old Wallop-e-an
Is a-prizin' up hell round the town of Cheyenne . . . "

A bullet clipped his ear almost unnoticed as he thus expressed himself. He sent a final shot to silence the sniper, and sat down laughing.

"Empty your carbine into that gulch, Bud," he said, while reloading his guns. "I admire your style of fightin', but it ain't safe."

"It's safer than my shooting," said Maitland, doing, however, as he was told.

"Sounds convincin', anyhow," Speed approved, and threw out a more accurate barrage in front.

There was no direct answer to Maitland's fire from the gulch, but presently a spurt of bullets from the creek canyon threw up earth at a mark a few yards below him. He discovered that their canteen had been kicked over the edge during his struggle with the gunman, and had rolled into the ravine, where it appeared to be in view of some unseen marksman, who was trying to puncture it.

The bitter-sweet taste of the gun smoke that swirled among the rocks made him thirsty, but thirst would soon be the least of their needs for water, at the rate Speed was getting scarred. Without stopping to consider chances, he slid over the boulder into the ravine, using its depression for cover, and caught the canteen strap, while lead buzzed over him like a flight of hornets. A glance up the gulch showed him that returning would be less simple. The rock at the head of the ravine was more exposed than it had seemed from above, and the last few feet of the scramble would spread-eagle him for a clear target.

Speed saw his difficulty.

"Crawl up the rock and lay quiet awhile," he cautioned. "When you're ready to climb in, give a whistle and I'll draw their fire."

Maitland followed these instructions till he was at the foot of the rock. Already the fire had been diverted from him to the other side of the bluff. He could not see Speed, but guessed his reckless strategy. The outlaw was deflecting the shots by exposing himself, and was only waiting to draw them more effectively by offering a clear mark.

To avoid that, Maitland omitted the signal, measured the rock and jumped. The leap almost took him over, but, hampered by the canteen, he caught an uncertain hold and hung suspended for a moment.

In that pause a stunning jar nailed his shoulder to the rock. The shot had come from above. As he scrambled sidewise with his good arm, he saw some smoke drift from a pine tree in the canyon and a glint of metal high in the branches pointing at him. Swiftly as he struggled, he had no doubt that the next shot would crumple him. But just as he topped the rock, he heard branches snapping and knew without looking that the sniper had come crashing down out of the tree.

He thought Speed's gun had saved him. So apparently did the men in the canyon, who sent a hail of lead at the outlaw's position. Under cover again, Maitland pulled his sopping shirt away from his shoulder and, thus engaged, did not notice that Speed was staring in astonishment at a curl of smoke high on the hill on the other side of the canyon.

The outlaw gave a ruminative smile, which faded when he looked at Maitland's wound. The bullet had gone through a shoulder muscle, making a painful and bloody tear.

"To go get plugged for the water to wash it ain't such good figurin'," he said severely, as he swabbed the wound clean and checked the blood with a rough bandage.

Meanwhile, he raised his head abruptly several times to look into the creek canyon and up the hill.

"Keep on exposing yourself that way," said Maitland, "you'll get killed."

Speed grunted quaintly.

"Funny, ain't you."

But on finishing the bandage, he took another glance over the bluff and seized the carbine.

"They're gettin' hot now," he said, grimly drawing a bead through the timber at some barely visible figures who had crossed the creek far below and were mounting the opposite bank. Two men toppled back to prove the precision of his aim at long range. But the rest kept on, behind shielding rocks and trees. "Git ready for a slide down the gulch, Bud," said Speed. "We'll have to fight this out in the creek."

Hardly had he spoken, however, when he halted to cast another wondering look at the opposite hill. Wisps of smoke eddied out from various points high in the timber. The men who had started the ascent paused irresolutely. These shots from above came as a surprise, throwing a new and disturbing factor into their plan. They suspected that Speed had planted a guard on the hill to protect the bluff, and they had no way of guessing its strength. Finally they dropped back into the canyon, to consult, it seemed, with their leader.

THIS development also puzzled the men in the pack train, who crowded down into the creek canyon.

"You haven't any men up on that hill?" Maitland asked Speed.

Speed's grin was mysterious.

"Ain't I though! I got one, and he's as good as a gang. The little devil had it all figured when he crossed the bridge."

"Pete?" Maitland exclaimed.

But their attention was now summoned back to the posse. There was a glimpse of Fallon, with his arm in a bandage, giving orders, and then a stir of preparation in the timber.

"What do you figure they're studyin' to do now?" queried Speed as he cleaned his guns.

The answer came directly. Two men moved out into the open trail, carrying a white rag on a stick.

"Too soon," the outlaw muttered. "They ain't goin' to give in. They's somethin' in the wind, Bud, and I don't like the smell of it." He recharged his guns while they were approaching.

The emissaries advanced within a few yards of the top of the bluff.

"Close enough," Speed warned them. "Say your piece."

"The camp offers you a fair trial if you'll come out and give up your guns."

"Tell the camp that when the trail's fixed I'll put up my guns. We'll give 'em up to no man."

"Is that final?"

"That's the bottom card."

The man gave an inscrutable leer.

"It's your funeral," he said, "but I'll convey your ideas."

As the two turned to descend the slope, Speed's guns still covered them. On the way down, they swerved suddenly and cut in behind a sunk boulder.

"Now what the hell!" the outlaw muttered.

Almost instantly a missile that looked like a candle hurtled into the air toward him from behind the rock. With a flash of instinct quicker than thought, Speed discharged both guns at it as he ducked for shelter.

There was a deafening roar that no gun could account for; the ground lurched and the air was filled with an acrid odor like that of burning seaweed. Speed seared the atmosphere still more with a revolting curse.

"Dynamite!"

But peering down through the smoke and dust, they saw that the stick, hit in the air and exploding on its downward fall, had unbedded the rock behind which the dynamiters had taken cover. One of the men had been killed by the boulder's fall; the other lay moaning, farther down the slope, with his hands over his eyes, blasted by his own charge.

This retribution did not lessen the outlaw's rage. He blazed with both guns among the crowd in the timber, not troubling to distinguish between Fallon's gang and the prospectors, who had been drawn nearer when they heard the crash. A frightened packhorse ran out from the attackers' cover, and men scrambled wildly to get out of its way.

With a grunt of deadly purpose, Speed lifted the carbine and took deliberate aim at the pack on this horse. Maitland realized his intention just in time to strike up the barrel, so that the bullet sang harmlessly over the creek.

"No," he said. "The camp didn't know about the dynamite."

There were signs, in fact, of angry protest from some of the prospectors; but after an interval of argument, Fallon gave another order. His men cut down into the canyon and swarmed up on the other side. Their new plan was to rout the guard which they thought Speed had posted on the hill, and then to riddle the bluff from above.

Until now, Speed had contented himself mainly with making the trail impassable. Now he shot with a searching intent to kill, hoping the while that Pete would vacate his position. But the gun kept speaking on the hill; the boy was standing his ground. After the first few yards of ascent, the timber on the near bank offered the attackers a helpful screen. Speed's eye came back to the boulders on the other side of the creek. If he could reach these, he could sweep a wider arc of hill, with no impeding trees.

He was gathering up the ammunition to make this desperate move, when a sudden din from below stopped him. Maitland, from his lookout, shouted above the roar—

"Look!"

The deep voice of a heavy caliber gun was booming and reverberating through the canyon. It had halted the men on the hill, who now answered it by pouring a hot fire into the creek. Bullets were splashing like rain around a wiry, gray headed figure who was fording the creek through a blue smoke haze, toward the boulders Speed had had in view. Coolly munching a large tobacco wad, he returned the broadside as he went, without haste, but with terrible effect.

"By ginger!" cried Speed. "It's Brent's deer gun. And ain't she a-talkin'?"

The old Sharps .50 buffalo gun was an unpleasant weapon to face on any terms, and it was now being handled by a master. With the skill of a veteran Indian fighter, Brent availed himself of every inch of cover afforded by rock and stream till he had won his position. Between two boulders that shielded him on three sides, he was able to rake the hillside, and did so, while Speed protected his flank from the bluff.

"Now, barrin' jinxes wild," said Speed, "it looks like Fallon was outheld."

So also reckoned the men in the pack train, who had watched the fight with growing restlessness. Fallon had evidently boasted that he would clear the trail in jig time, and they had stood by to see him make his bet, but they were not prepared to see this prolonged into a siege. Many of them were thinking that they had backed the wrong ticket and had lost time.

At this point, however, there was a wavering in the rear of the crowd. A hum ran down the pack train, and Fallon summoned back his men with an exultant shout. The crowd spread out to give way to a cavalcade coming down the trail.

Speed murmured an outraged protest to the gods of chance when he saw who they were.

"That does it," he announced with eloquent restraint. "This scrap has on'y been a tunin' up, Bud. Yer comes the orchestra!"

CHAPTER IX

ON THE HOUSE

THE cavalcade came jingling into view—men in a uniform of scarlet, blue and gold, whose polished equipment made a handsome glitter in the sun.

"Soldiers?" Maitland asked in wonder.

"You can call 'em that," was Speed's grim answer. "They're the crack trailsmen of the cop kingdom and a hard shootin' outfit. The simple name they goes by is the Northwest Mounted Police."

This detachment was the first of the reenforcements sent into the Yukon under administration of Major Walsh to police the gold rush. Their regalia had not yet been changed to a plain service garb. They were passing over American ground, and their authority did not begin until they crossed the Canadian line at the summit of the pass, but its extent was not a question in the minds of any of the onlookers.

Cheering and jubilant, Fallon's outfit got ready to parade through behind them, never doubting that Speed's hand had been called.

"When I made that bet about the bridge," muttered Speed, "I plumb forgot to count in the Northwest Mounted. Get goin', Bud. Slide down the gulch there into the creek and beat up it. Maybe you can overtake Pete. Anyways, get out of range."

"You're mad!" Maitland cried, refusing to move. "You can't challenge their right of way!"

"I'd rather be plugged by the rangers than see that bunch of sure-thing gamblers herd through behind 'em. It means checkin' in to a man-size outfit. Will you go?"

For an instant Maitland thought of trying to hold him by force, but something primal and absolute in his decision prevented. The police squadron was now within eighty yards of the turn of the defile into the creek canyon.

"I can't wait to argue it with you, boy," said the outlaw abruptly. "All I can say is, I'm wishin' you a better run of luck than you've had. The best won't be too good." He wrung his partner's hand in both of his. "As your friend Hoorayshus says, a man's got to die some time, and what's a better way to die than shootin'?" Then, as remonstrance froze on Maitland's lips, he leaped over the rock corral and slid down into the trail, with both guns drawn, the red bandage gone from his head, and humming the tune he had used as a battle cry, "For old Settin' Bull and old Wallop-e-an is a-prizin' up hell round the town of Cheyenne . . . " It was mad, no doubt, but it had a kind of style.

The police captain halted his troop within a few yards of this surprising challenger, while the crowd banked up curiously behind.

"Gents," said Speed politely, "the trail's barred."

A pair of level eyes covered him in a cool, impersonal study.

"Barred till when?" There was the merest hint of irony in the velvet casualness of the officer's tone.

"Until I'm downed where I stand, or a pack of quitters standin' back of you does some chores on it."

Inspector Drew owed his command to certain gifts of understanding which had not been idle on his way from Skagway. His eyes wrinkled thoughtfully, and then with a slow gleam of humor, he asked a surprising question.

"Would it be all right, so far as my

men are concerned, if we fixed the bridge?"

Speed looked as if he mistrusted his hearing. He scratched his head with the nose of his gun.

"Says which?"

Drew repeated his proposition.

"By jingo, mister," said the outlaw blankly, "if you mean what that listens like, you sure take my money. But we couldn't leave you do it."

"Doesn't matter," Drew replied. "Bridges are in my line."

He dismounted and gave an order to his men, who unlimbered some axes and other tools and went down to the bridge

Speed almost turned to stare after them, wondering whether this chivalry concealed a trap. Fallon's men were too astonished to profit by his surprise, even had they dared. The action of the police had produced a strong effect on the miners as well. These rangers represented the law under which they would pass when they crossed the border, and that was rather close.

The outlaw wheeled on Fallon's gang.

"If you tin horns knowed the meanin' of real pride," he said, "what these men are doin' would shame you. Bein' already lower than a snake's belly in a wheel rut, you ain't got no margin for such feelin's. But you fellers—" and he looked past Fallon to the prospectors—"are you goin' to stand by and watch a Canadian outfit make a trail for you on American ground? If you are, I'll be damned if I can figure in what man's camp, Northwest or Southwest, you ever drawed pay as miners."

Some of the prospectors shifted uneasily under this taunt.

"By the Lord!" cried one of them, jerking a shovel from his pack, "I've swung hand steel and a muck stick from yer to Chloride, and no man ever seen me skunk a shift. What I couldn't see was makin' a trail while half the camp was soldierin' down at Skagway, waitin' to have it done for 'em."

"They's somethin' to that," said Speed.

Another man unpacked his tools.

"Dunno whether you're plumb right or not, feller, but you put up a game fight. We didn't have nothin' to do with that dynamite."

Some one shouted,

"Set them bum schemers to work!" and there was a chorus of profane approval.

Fallon's lip curled. He swung his mules suddenly through the brush toward the creek, meaning to cross to the other bank and regain the trail above the bridge. But he and his men found themselves checked between Brent's rifle and Speed's guns. The old-timer disarmed him.

"Keep him covered, Brent," said Speed. "The rest of you gunmen can stay and work, or pick up your wounded and make tracks. If there's a man jack of you left here in five minutes, he'll shovel dirt."

MOST of them scattered sooner, and the prospectors swung into the grading job with an energy that brought quick results. Little remained to be done. The repairing of the bridge was a matter of lining up the placement of four felled logs, and the trail work was almost complete when Drew came up from the creek canyon.

"Your bridge is ready," the police inspector said. "Hope to see you again on the other side of the pass." He extended his hand and Speed took it.

"It may be fortunate for you," Drew added, "that there's some doubt as to where our line begins."

All the outlaw's mistrust of the law came alert.

"How?" he asked.

"About seventy years ago," said Drew impersonally, "a treaty was signed between England and Russia to decide the boundary between the coastal strip of the Alaskan Panhandle and Northwest Canada. The wording was rather vague as to whether the strip should be measured from the sea water limit, or the outer line of the coast, or the indentures in the coast line. Some thirty years ago, when your Government bought Alaska, the point was still left undetermined. So at this moment it's a delicate problem whether the ground we're standing on is American or Canadian. I wouldn't care to make an arrest on no man's ground."

The outlaw's eyes probed Drew's.

"What does that mean?"

"Only a friendly interest." The officer smiled. "Unquestionably our territory begins on the other side of the summit, and gunplay and rioting like this would be a serious matter in the Yukon Territory. However, if a man plays the game straight with us, what's behind him doesn't specially concern me. We need men who know timber, water and tough cold. Well, I trust your political discord reaches a peaceful settlement."

And with a nod to Maitland, he left to rejoin his men, who were waiting to take the trail.

Speed made his partner sit down to rest in the shadow of a rock near the creek. Then he returned to Fallon, who stood somberly quiet under Brent's guard, and told the old trailsman to lower his gun.

"You owe me a thousand dollars, Fallon," he said soberly, when the deposed camp boss was uncovered.

Fallon drew out a wallet and counted over the amount.

"Your men are free to bury them messengers in the hole they blasted," Speed suggested.

"Dynamite was their own idea," retorted Fallon. "When I put a charge under you, it won't misfire."

"We needn't wait for that time," said Speed. "Give him his six-shooters, Brent." This also was done. "The trail's fixed," Speed explained, "and I resign all claims to the job of trail boss. We're talkin' level. I don't aim to tangle with the rangers' law after we cross the summit. But, where we stand, there ain't a law between you and me and the sky. We don't even know that it's Alaskan ground. You've got a bad arm, so I'll discard my best gun, and we'll settle the feud atween us right here and now."

"We'll settle it when I've got both hands limber," said Fallon grimly. "That'll be the next time we meet, wherever we do. Unless you're scared to wait."

The outlaw's brow clouded.

"I've always conceded you had guts, Fallon, and you can do me the same justice. I'm willin' to believe what you say about the dynamite, and even to go further than I believe in. They's been wounds on both sides. Do you want to bury the quarrel?"

Fallon did not misjudge that. Considering the risk he faced, his answer showed a keen estimate of his opponent's quality.

"The Yukon ain't big enough for you and me, Malone. I aim to get you."

"You'll rope a bearcat," said Speed. "How'ver, the place for you right now is at the tail of the pack train."

The other chewed his lip as the train, now in movement again, wound slowly by.

At the tail of it came the red bull. At the tail of the bull came the miner with the red shirt, whose balky burros had prevented him from gaining a position farther up the line, and who had had to yield his place for reasons of safety. This adjustment had somewhat appeased the bull, but the miner's resentment still smoldered, and recent events had not helped to cool it. He mumbled to himself as he plodded behind his massive enemy.

When the bull paused at the head of the dip into the creek canyon, a terrible temptation overcame the much tried Argonaut. He aimed a studious kick at the animal from behind.

Bellowing pain and fury, the bull charged down the defile toward the bridge, sending horses and outfits pell-mell in a brawling tangle not visible from above.

"Makes me think," said Brent, as he backtrailed toward Liarsville with the two partners, "of when the old sow walked into Husky Dodd's shack at

Rocky Ford, back in '89, and et up his blastin' powder. Mule kicked the sow, and Rusty landed in three States . . . Lucky you boys didn't hit the horse with the dynamite pack. I was cuttin' down the crik with Katy yer, as near it as that tree."

The old-timer had a mashed finger joint, which concerned him much less than the fact that the trigger guard of his rifle had been broken by the same glancing shot. He left them near the river bridge to have it repaired at a portable forge, where a subtle smith was changing baser metals into gold by shoeing horses at five dollars a shoe and fifty cents a nail.

Maitland felt weak from his wound, and in reaction to the scenes of blood which the other two accepted so lightly. He was troubled in another way about Garnet's hauling job; it would be awhile before he could shoulder a pack.

This anxiety was relieved, however, in an unexpected way. When they reached the cache, they found that Garnet had gone. A note attached to one of the packs advised them that he had left Alaska, deferring his trip to Dawson till the following Spring, when—he said he had learned—steamers would be running up the Yukon. The note, dated two days before, assigned them his outfit and the horses, free of all claims.

While it was true that he had owed them some wages, and that much of the outfit would be useless to him, with the change in his plans, this was a tremendous windfall.

Looking through the packs for bandages, Speed uncovered a complete emergency kit, and among other medicinal aids, several bottles of choice Canadian rye.

"Kick me if I'm delirious," he mumbled, while unwinding a glittering seal from one of the bottle necks. He uncorked the bottle, sniffed its perfume and passed it to Maitland. "Take a big drink, Bud. You'll need it when I start tinkerin' with that shoulder."

When the bottle was returned to him, he rolled a mouthful appraisingly under his tongue and studied the label.

"Canucks is white men," he said as a considered verdict. "This label says Vancouver, like other things in the pack. Don't you figure that letter of Garnet's sounds kind of legal? I met a lawyer once who drunk rye."

"He might be a judge," Maitland suggested, "going up to take an appointment in Dawson."

Speed, who had been on the point of giving a graphic illustration of a lawyer drinking rye, checked the drink at his lips in a momentary awestruck stare. and then fortified his unbelief by swallowing it.

"Things like that don't happen," he protested.

"Or perhaps an expert looking into the boundary question for the Canadian House of Parliament?"

"If so," Speed mused, corking the bottle, "the drinks is on the house."

But here a more practical question caused him to look suddenly around the camp.

"Where's the team of pintos we drawed in this lucky fall?" he queried. "Do you reckon Garnet took 'em to Skagway to leave them with the feed?"

For the horses were nowhere in sight.

CHAPTER X

DEADFALL

THE place where they had left the unmoved part of Garnet's outfit on the Skagway beach was not easy to locate. A tent city had begun to take shape in their brief absence—a mushroom town of illuminated mushrooms, glowing through the dusky mist, and lighted by kerosene flares that sputtered garishly in the wind. Though the tangled lanes were still tufted with beach grass, a twisted main street was already defining itself, along a course determined by the camp sites of the first comers. Some saloons, half board and half canvas, with crude, temporary signs, were sounding the prelude to the wildest Winter in the history of the Western frontier camps. Skagway was soon to be flooded by that "general jail delivery" from the underworld of the coast towns.

When the partners did locate the spot through a maze of darkened tents, there was no sign either of the cache or the horses.

Speed's anger broke bounds.

"I'll skin the thievin' polecat who done this," he announced, in a voice intended for Skagway at large.

The neighboring tents had seemed empty, but a man now appeared noiselessly from one of the canvas lanes. He wore a dark suit of eccentric, but studied, fashion, with the collar of the jacket upturned, soft soled, shining shoes, and a black dicer hat, which was cocked over weasel eyes and unshaped features of a cast more common in cities than in gold camps.

"D-did you l-l-lose somethin'?" he inquired.

"A team of horses and a pack," said Speed, looking down at the slim stranger curiously, as if he were a new species. "Don't get nervous. I ain't 'specially suspectin' you."

"I ain't s-scared," said the stranger with apparent truth. All his nervousness was in his diction. "What k-k-kind of h-horses?"

"Both sorrel pintos; one of 'em was wall-eyed." As the man seemed to deliberate this, Speed added, "Paint horse."

"Circus horses, like?"

Speed grunted. Horses at least would appear to be safe from this soft shoed type.

"Colored in dabs," he explained patiently, "like a kid's agate marble."

"I just w-w-wanted to kn-now for sure," said his informant. "I'll t-t-t-t—" But finding this impossible to convey, he made it visual by motioning them to follow him.

As there was apparently no other way of finding out what he meant, they complied, Speed cautiously steering his partner away from the tent angles. Darkness had sharpened the blare of lights from the main street, but most of the tents were dark. It was the sociable hour after dark when saloon doors swung inward, and they followed their conductor's silently weaving course without an encounter.

Finally he motioned them to stop.

"Wait," he said. "I'll b-b-b-b—" And he drifted silently into the dark

Speed frowned after him and then at their dim surroundings, a cluster of empty tents near the beach. Not many minutes had elapsed when a low voice sounded close by, from the rising shelf of the shore.

"Hello!" The throaty, laughing music of the two syllables startled Maitland like a plucked harp chord.

The speaker joined them a moment later, and confronted Speed in a rich, velvety, corduroy suit, with a divided skirt, like a riding habit. She was hatless, but the dusk added its uncertainty to her expression.

Speed's face, too, was a clouded study.

"So it's your holdup," he grunted.

"I hadn't thought of it that way." Rose's voice softened as her eyes sought Maitland's.

"We was goin' to pay your come-on," Speed said. "We'd just as leave pay you and take it out of *his* hide."

She smiled a little at the inflection his anger had betrayed him into.

"Lefty isn't much of a come-on. He doesn't know what it's all about. Except that I asked him to watch and let me know when you came into camp. The horses and your cache were rescued from a thief who tried to sell them for his passage money out. I held them so you wouldn't shoot up the camp or get shot, looking for them. I wanted to be sure of meeting you, quietly and without Fallon's learning of it. That makes everything clear, doesn't it?"

"What we're to pay ain't so clear."

"Do I look—" Rose drew herself up with a mischievous but handsome touch of pride—"like a girl who has to rustle horses for money?"

"No, you don't," the outlaw acknowledged gloomily. "You look like a girl who could get gold mines for a smile. Not bein' out for jack, then what?"

"There's something you could do for me down the river. Something worth your while. Your partner probably told you."

"Three things," Speed mused, "I could imagine your wantin' done down the river. You might want us to raid a gold claim—but you come by gold too easy. You might want some one killed—though it's a hard thought about any one as young and pretty as you. Barrin' those—"

"What?" Rose asked, curiously.

"I don't read further. A woman's mind is a closed book I'd rather leave closed."

"You read well," Rose said. "But—" the trace of banter left her eyes and voice as she looked at Maitland's bandaged shoulder—"there's such a thing as a change of heart. I never thought of throwing you unprepared into a death feud. If I'd seen it coming, I could have told you some things. Why did you ever pass up the simple chance of ending that quarrel when it was in your hands?"

"It would be simpler for you, maybe, if Fallon was as dead as Owens?"

She did not answer the reference to Owens.

"I'd a lot rather it was Fallon than either of you," she said. "We have that much in common."

Speed shook his head at her gravely.

"I begin to feel sorry for this man Fallon. And him figurin' all the time you're his friend."

"He doesn't," she said, in a voice that was both somber and tense. "He's no fool. He just doesn't believe I'd play against him. The why of that doesn't matter. But I've no reason to be his friend. Less than ever, now." A deeper shadow crossed her face, and she added, with a vibrant fall in her tone, "It would have been simpler, as you say, if you'd killed him."

"Feelin' that way—if you did—you could have fixed him yourself."

She made a vague, disclaiming gesture.

"What I could do alone would backfire. Fail, perhaps. Hurt others—and not be so good for me."

"Hurt Pete, maybe?"

THERE was a change in Rose's expression, though whether of hostility or reserve the light was too dim to reveal to the partners.

"What happens to Pete," she said, pushing her hands into the pockets of her jacket, "is Pete's own affair, and nothing to me. I'm talking of Fallon and you. If my guess is right, he's heading for a region where you'd have a free hand. Your partner can't travel for awhile." Her eyes strayed to Maitland and back to Speed. "You don't want to pull him into that. Leave him here. I'll stake you with everything you need. If you don't win gold in the play, I'll loot the Yukon for you when you come back. I can."

The restiveness of the outlaw slipped its rein.

"Whatever Fallon may be, we don't need a woman's help to fight him. Do we go hunt those horses, or will you say where they are, and what we owe you for your trouble?"

Rose spoke resignedly.

"That can be left hanging till you come to camp again. Maybe by then you'll be wiser. You're clever. Cleverer than I thought. With all our heads together—"

"Not if we're conscious. Come on, Bud."

"You needn't go," Rose intervened. "There's Lefty now."

The soft shoed man returned in a direction different from that in which he had vanished. He was leading the pintos, with the remainder of Garnet's outfit packed on them in a workmanlike hitch, evidently not his own.

"Something tells me we'll meet again," Rose said to Speed, "if you'll do what I tell you now. When you leave camp, better not take the street. I happened to overhear something. You've made some other enemies. Give the Pack Train Saloon a wide pass."

While Speed was testing the pack lashings on the broncos, not seeming to listen, her hand touched Maitland's arm.

"Trust me," she murmured. "Do just as I said. And keep out of Fallon's way. I'll see you again before the Spring. Don't forget me."

He was conscious of the delicate pressure of her hands, and of a faint rose petal fragrance as she hovered near a moment; then dazedly realized that she had gone before he remembered to give her back the token he was still carrying.

Speed took the halter of the lead horse from the man with the dicer, who was nervously dodging the tossing of its head.

"We'll pay in money," said the outlaw grimly. Drawing out the roll of bills he had won from Fallon, he peeled it in half. "Here . . . I've heard tell of you city gang thieves. You ain't worth ropin' to brand, but you've maybe done us some good without aimin' to."

Lefty made a gesture to decline.

"I d-d-d-d—" He was unable to frame the refusal, however, and the money melted from his slim fingers into his pocket, as if acceptance of it were something to conceal. "Thanks, p-p-pal. That was a good s-s-steer she g-g-give you. Don't foller the st—the street. It's hot."

"Get out of my range before I push you over," growled Speed, and waited till the man vanished.

"We pass up that dark steer and take the street," he said to his partner.

It was, at any rate, more open and visible. Its alternate patches of light and shadow exposed the entrance of each resort, and shielded their approach. The outlaw led the broncos through it at an unhurried pace, not noticeably glancing to right or left, but keeping his free arm still. They walked through beams of light, marbled with tobacco smoke and warm with an aura of perfume, liquor and spruce shavings. Men grouped around the bright doors watched them pass without a challenging move.

The last saloon, where the street joined the trail, was called The Pack Train. There Speed's tread became a little more measured. No figures loitered round this entrance; the noisy revel inside was too alluring. Light poured into the road from under raised swing doors.

They reached that radiant shaft, which flickered with the shuffle of dancing feet, and moved across it safely toward the outer margin of darkness.

"Which shows—" Speed began. But the thought was not completed.

He stopped and wheeled with a suddenness that brought the lead bronco's chest against his leg. Maitland heard a double crash, saw a bright flame stab from Speed's gun. Something burned past his cheek. The saloon door behind them was swinging to and fro, throwing blinks of light over the sand. In the luminous pool just below it, a man lay crumpled with his face upturned. It was the shell dealer they had seen at Liarsville.

They gained the darkness of the trail before the street filled; and no one followed them.

Maitland shivered. That was something different from the hot blooded clash on the creek. A dead face under a swinging door; the sudden lull in the piano's beat . . . In a camp, as in a town, one looked for some sign of the legal authority that was lacking on the trail. He had heard it rumored that a United States marshal was on his way to administer law in Skagway, but, if he had arrived, his presence was unfelt. Speed's shot had answered a vital need for defense. His assailant had drawn on him from behind, and from the shelter of the saloon door. The miracle was his fleet instinct in reading the source of the flicker in the shadows ahead, and his lightning response to it.

They kept trailing in wary silence, till they made camp far up the canyon.

Over the fire, the outlaw sat lost in reflection.

"I reckon that was a case," he said at last, "of what you would call 'suggestion'. The man wouldn't believe I didn't have a gun notched for him."

"What made him think you did?" Maitland asked.

"I follered him one night in Nevada when I was trailin' that nugget of Joe's. He was on'y a tramp tin horn, and not the kind of man I was lookin' for. Seems, though, he must have had other things to be nervous about. His imagination started guns blazin' then, and I had to fight my way out of a general mix I didn't aim to start."

Not wishing to stir any embers, Maitland checked a question on his tongue about the dark haired singing girl. But, in a way, Speed answered it unasked.

"I've been figurin' slower since I made that mistake. They's a heap of pretty brunette girls in the Western camps who pertend to sing. This one maybe gives us a true steer, for her own reasons. She don't care about money. With her looks and other gifts, she likely don't even care about gold mines. Could get 'em too easy."

"But the gold secret she spoke of—?"

"Well, what do you make of it?"

Maitland told of what had happened on his first meeting with Rose, and of his later surmises about Owens and Fallon.

Speed shook his head doubtfully.

"Outfits are gambled and lost right along on the trail without any scheme of grubstakin' a prospector or cuttin' in on a gold secret. Owens didn't look or act like a man whose judgment of a gold prospect would be good. Considered from the outside, if Owens' prospector in the North had a gold mine, why wouldn't it be recorded, thus endin' the secret? Unless it was just a lost mine or a wild goose."

"Then what motive would Rose have?"

"Motive?" Speed's mouth tightened. "Maybe it's better for you not to guess. The best trick a woman has is to get you wonderin', and nothin' does it quicker in this country than a gold rumor. When she talks of puttin' heads together, whose head do you figure she's interested in? Seems like Fallon and me both cramp her ideas. She baits me with a gold lure to go trailin' him, and her other inducement is plausible. It would surely be a wise move to hunt Fallon down and settle that feud—but not on Canadian ground. If that ain't her motive, then it's just barely possible she's workin' with Fallon to nail my pelt. Or else—" he concluded, less audibly—"she's drawin' evidence for the law. She's the most insidious woman I ever met, and I've knowed some bearcats."

The pain of Maitland's wound and the shock of the night's encounter prevented him from sifting his partner's logic. Gradually he sank into a fevered half sleep, thinking of Muriel and home. But somehow a thought of Pete and Rose kept tangling through his mind. With the impression that Speed was still wondering . . .

CHAPTER XI

SNOW TRACK

FROM the top of the pass they descended eastward into a new world of white mountains, less deeply forested than on the western side of the range. They had been slowed by Maitland's shoulder, and had known, long before they crossed the Canadian line at the summit, that a frozen barrier lay between them and the Lewes.

Dipping through white tufted timber, they relieved the horses by "rawhiding" their outfit. The progress of the pack train was muted now to a cheerful creak and jingle from the pack harness. Faces brightened and weary steps quickened as they came in view of a huddle of tents at the fringe of a great level snow plain, ringed in dark spruce—where the upper expanse of Lake Bennett spread vast and quiescent in a flutter of frost.

Mounted Police discipline gave the camp at Bennett an effect of order remote from the sprawling license of Skagway at the foot of the pass, though the distance between the two camps was much less than labored relays had made it. Since Bennett was the first of the long chain of lakes and navigable rivers which joined the Lewes River at the Thirty Mile Rapids, very few travelers tugged their outfits farther. They wintered here within reach of the coast.

But Speed, after a disparaging glance at the black spruce around it, suggested that he and his partner prospect down the frozen water route for better timber. Where they found it, they could build a Winter cabin, whipsaw lumber for a boat and be that much nearer the big river at the thaw.

Maitland approved the idea. Each had a tacit and different reason for keeping the other removed from Skagway.

So they pushed on into a wild solitude, using sleds on the lake ice—a clean, smooth change from the shambles of mud and dead horses through which they had climbed.

Windy Arm led them into the wooded stillness of Lake Tagish. They were nearing the lower end of that great ice sheet some days later, when they came on an advance crew of police, setting up a barracks.

An officer walked out through the snow flicker to meet them. It was Drew, in Winter service uniform. He asked where they were bound.

"Just lookin' for timber and a place to camp," said Speed.

Drew filled a pipe as he eyed the pintos, and talked horses. Not more than one in seven of the pack animals that started over the pass had won through, and most of these having been discards to begin with, it appeared that the police had not been able to fill from that source their need of well conditioned carriers.

"If you boys would like to do a haul for us, and you're heading toward the Lewes," he said, "I could give you some supplies to deliver at Thirty Mile."

Speed looked darkly at his partner, but Maitland thought it provident to accept. With what lay behind them, it might be good politics to do the police a service.

"We could leave our stuff here," he ventured, "and prospect for a camp on the way."

"Good," said the inspector. "If you make your camp between here and Lebarge, you'll be in the line of Corporal Cathcart's patrol. Cathcart's a new man. It will be an event for him to meet any one along that lonely route."

Maitland asked whether he used dogs.

"No. Our huskies haven't arrived yet. Speaking of dogs, though, Cathcart's interested in the sled track of a mysterious Siwash he's seen down that way. Should you get a glimpse of this lone Indian, you'll have exciting news for him."

Though Drew's tone was serious, there was a subdued spark of humor in his eye, as if it were not unusual for new recruits in the service to see mysterious tracks.

"What makes the track a mystery?" Maitland asked.

"It may not be one." Drew smiled. "But there's a deep legend among the old-timers about the particular native Cathcart has in mind. Several years ago a prospector from the Pelly brought in some gold he claimed to have got during a storm from a strange Indian he couldn't describe. The Indian's face was hooded deep in a fur parka and it was a blinding storm. He traded in Chinook for supplies and whisky, so the story went—this was before we had any men in the territory. Maybe just a yarn to cover a gold strike. But around the trading post fires some wild versions grew from it.

"Whenever a cache was robbed, or ribbed by wolves, the unknown Siwash was blamed. A man from Ogilvie used a team of Manitoba huskies to hang on what he took to be the native's scent, through a blizzard. He came out at the old Selkirk post in a battered condition, too far gone to tell what had happened. A cliff might have fallen on him. But the old-timers held he'd paid the penalty for tracking some fabulous gold source of the Siwash's. We heard the legend when Constantine's first squad entered the Yukon in '95. But we haven't found anything to substantiate it since—except some fugitive sled traces that may have a simple explanation.

"Interesting case," the inspector concluded, tapping out his pipe. "Most interesting, perhaps, as a study in the mental effects of the Northern gold trails. If you're caught in a storm and hit some tough going—which I hope you won't—you may see the ghost too . . . But I'll get your consignment ready."

Speed had listened silently. His mind, Maitland guessed, was much less concerned with Drew's story than with the matter of their being employed by the police. He did not voice his misgivings till they took the trail.

"Who do we call our boss now?" he complained. "The Crown persecutor, or somethin'?"

Maitland laughed and said they were hauling for a lady. Though that lady was the Queen, the omen kept Speed thoughtful for hours.

THEIR route from Lake Marsh to Lake Lebarge lay along the ice of a narrow river of box canyons and rapids whose redoubtable names they knew from hearsay. Avoiding the frozen spume of Squaw Rapids, they cut into the canyon again far below, and camped near the grim walled gorge of Whitehorse. The thunder and froth of this mighty flume were stifled now in porous mounds of frost. Cold had checked the white horses, but their lather hung splattered against the stone in a scud of weird patterns—signs of bridled fury that made silence audible.

Where the canyon swung open at the lower end, the shore rocks were strewn with wrecked boats, mutely attesting the force of the torrent that hurled them there, and the courage of the men who had pioneered this wilderness, in which the police, as yet, had hardly so much as felled a tree.

There was an obvious advantage in choosing a cabin site somewhere below the rapids, so as to eliminate some of the worst water hazards when they launched their boat in the Spring. Between White Horse and the Takhim they found a creek which cut into the left bank of the river. The timber around it would do for cabin logs and, as Speed said, they could haul in the better grained wood they needed for the boat. Accordingly, along their way, they picked out and marked trees to be logged off and hauled back for whipsawing.

The snowfall continued in flurries as they sledded on toward Lake Lebarge. It erased the track of a patrolman's mount, which their more devious trail had crossed occasionally. In the whole distance between Tagish and the head of Lebarge they saw no other sign of a living creature. The days were shortening. It was now rather late in November, and even the forest life had found its Winter refuges.

So, when they were returning to the horses after a side excursion to examine timber, Maitland was surprised to see his partner stop suddenly and look down, as if he had detected some mark on a blank rise of snow.

To his own eye, the white bank was as smooth as an undeveloped photograph. But when Speed drew his attention to the tone of the surface, he did see some shadowy marks that looked as if ghostly feet had walked over it, or as if the shape of footprints had been dimly painted on the crystals.

The shape was not that of bootprints but of some moccasin-like foot covering. There were other phantom dots and lines that suggested a sled-track, unaccountably, to him.

Roused from a study by his question,

Speed explained that the prints had been made before or during the snowfall, and had been left visible only by the slight difference in tone where new snow had filled in the depressions. The smaller marks were the footprints of a dog team, the faint lines were the track of the sled, and the moccasin imprint had been made by the driver's mukluks.

"Must be the track of the lone Siwash Drew's corporal was curious about," he said. "Myster'ous enough, too, because there ain't any Siwash settlements in this region, and nothin' much to bring a wanderin' Siwash in."

But as they saw no further signs of the track, it dimmed in Maitland's mind to an impression as faint as the marks in the snow.

They made an uneventful trip down the stretch of Lake Lebarge to the Lewes, and delivered their consignment to a patrol camp there. Then they retraced the lonely route, loading the empty sleds with logs they felled along the way.

Prospecting for timber sometimes led them far apart, Speed carrying the gun on the chance, he said, of starting a snow rabbit. They had been separated in this way for some hours when Maitland, straying through a forest off the lake and testing the grain of the trees, became aware that it was turning dark. He went back to the sleds and picked up Speed's trail, which led out of sight into the dusk and far up the lake. As they would soon have to camp, he followed without hurry, through a lazing fall of snow which intensified, if that were possible, the deep quietude of the sabled woods.

A wolf howl, weird in the distance, deepened it still more.

Some minutes later his ears were stung to alertness by the muffled double crack of a rifle, and then another shot, or its echo.

Wondering what game Speed would consider worth that number of shells, he pulled the horses into a faster gait.

The dusk was more opaque when he came in view of the outlet of the river that linked Lebarge with Whitehorse and Lake Marsh. In the gloom he almost stumbled into the hummock of an air hole—one of those flaws which warm currents from beneath sometimes cause in the ice of the Northern lakes. There were several, he noticed, where the lake shores narrowed.

Presently, through the snow drizzle, he discerned a dark, lifeless bulk on the snow blanketed ice, about two hundred yards inshore and near the river neck. On reaching it, he found it to be a stray Woodland caribou—the first he had ever seen. It had been dropped by a clean head shot, and its blood, still warm, stained the crystals with a spreading pinkish pool which the snow was covering. Speed's bullet had stolen a feast from the timber wolves.

In answer to his shout, his partner came toward him out of the shadow of a clump of cottonwoods at the lake shore.

"WHAT were you looking for?" Maitland asked.

The other had an oddly abstracted look and was still scanning the shore line.

"I must be gettin' mental," he said. "I got a dim sight of this caribou crossin' the river mouth, and had to shoot twice to stop it. Then it seemed like somethin' else was movin' in the timber. But I couldn't find nothin'."

"Maybe a wolf was trailing the deer you shot?"

"Maybe. That's what it was, I reckon."

They put the deer on the sled and kept trailing till they camped in the shelter of some timber above the river mouth. When they had skinned the game and cleaned up, darkness had closed around them with a bitter night cold. There was no wind; the snow kept falling lightly through the numbed air.

Maitland broke limbs from a fallen tree for the camp-fire, while Speed was cooking caribou steaks on some wood coals, at a distance from the spruce boughs on which they had hung the deer meat to freeze. The fire cast a twinkling glow through the snow screen to the far bank of the draw, but its warmth could be felt only at close range. Releasing the ax a moment to blow on his fingers, Maitland happened to glance across the river, and was arrested by a yellow gleam from a dark, slinking shape of fur.

"There's your wolf," he called to his partner.

Speed gave another turn to the steak he was browning; looked up, and then rose for a clearer view.

"That's no wolf," he muttered. "It's a Siwash dog. And lame." For as he spoke, the dog slunk off with a halting step into the timbered darkness. "Must of strayed from the team of that disappearin' Indian. Or the Siwash cut it loose."

The cruelty of leaving a lamed dog to starve seemed extreme to Maitland, but while the steaks were cooking Speed mentioned some harsher examples of the law of survival in the snow country, of which their own killing of the deer was a mild case in point. His suggestion was that much worse might have befallen the lamed dog, had the Siwash himself been in need of food.

The topic did not dull their appetite. For men who have been living on a scurvy-inducing diet, the craving wakened by the savor of fresh meat is proof against almost any mental impressions. They ate with more restraint than the dog or the wolves from which they had diverted the kill might have done, but with just as keen a hunger. Having appeased it, they lolled in the fire's warmth, as replete as the poet whose heart was too full for words.

Speed took a deep drag at a waning cigaret and tossed the butt in the fire. Then he got up and sleepily stretched his arms. As he did so, his eyes came suddenly and sharply awake. He bent forward to look into the timber shadows where he had hung the deer; half paused as if to lower his arms, but instantly raised them again, to Maitland's astonishment, high above his head.

"Throw up your hands, Bud, quick!" was his startling order.

Maitland obeyed, though he could not see the cause.

"For a total uninhabited country," Speed said to the timber shadows, "this one is some misleadin'."

The woods gave back no comment as to that.

"Are you bein' hostile or just cautious?" Speed asked.

"If I was a little more cautious," a gruff voice spoke with freezing incisiveness out of the dark, "you wouldn't be talkin'. Stand over on the far side of the fire and keep your eyes this way. Both of you."

They complied.

"Were those your shots awhile back?" the voice asked.

With his arms still raised, Speed nodded toward the caribou hide that hung in the fire smoke.

"I reckon your dog was trackin' the same deer?"

"Dog?" the voice demanded sharply.

"We seen a lamed dog acrost the draw. Seems like the deer brung all our trails together."

"Hell," the man growled, in a weird tone that seemed to expect no answer. "Is that dog still alive?"

"If you need meat, we'll give you a cut," Speed said. "Cook you a steak too, if you're hungry."

There was an unreadable pause. With the firelight in his eyes, Maitland could see nothing but its wavering play among the dense spruce shadows, though at times it seemed to catch a metallic gleam at the point the voice came from.

"What are you men doin' down here?"

"Cuttin' timber," said Speed.

"See any other travelers along this route?"

"Not around here . . . Could tell you better if I knowed who you was watchin' for."

Another pause followed before the

speaker said, with a definite effect of challenge—

"An oldish, square built, whisky faced man."

"With a boy?"

"Yes—with a boy. The man's name is Owens."

"He's drowned," Speed said, with a sidelong flicker at his partner.

That left the voice mute for a full minute.

"How drowned?" The question had a cold directness.

"All we heard was, he lost his outfit in a game in Skagway."

"Who was he gamblin' with?"

Speed described Fallon.

"What happened to the kid?"

"He trailed over the pass ahead of us. We don't know where he went."

"There wouldn't be a woman with Owens?"

"Not with him. There was a pretty, dark haired girl in Skagway who looked sort of interested."

This was ignored.

"I mean an older woman?"

"No."

DURING a suspended interval, Speed stood motionless as stone. The voice spoke at last with a queer note of tension and deliberation.

"I needed that deer meat bad. It may be lucky you seen me, and it may be a long ways from it, for you and me both. How good is your memory?"

"Feeble," said Speed.

"How do I know it?"

"All I can say is, we can imagine a man's maybe havin' a good reason for leavin' a sketchy trail. If I didn't figure you for a friend of Pete's, I'd take the chance of reachin' for a gun even now. But if you are, you can bank we've never seen or heard you."

In a keen, dark silence the owner of the voice seemed to examine this carefully. There was no sound but the faint hiss of the snow flakes that touched the red coals as they filtered through the evergreen boughs.

"Stand where you are," the voice said roughly, "for five minutes. I don't need to tell you what'll happen if you make a move to trace me."

The quiet seemed to be absolute. Not a twig snapped. Maitland could not even detect the stirring of a spruce needle. But Speed's eyes almost imperceptibly traced a course through the shadows to the tree where they had cached the meat.

He allowed a tactful space to elapse before he lowered his arms. Maitland brought his own down painfully, conscious for the first time that they were almost frozen. Speed revived the fire and limbered his hands without a word. Then he went over to the tree where he had hung the meat.

Their ominous visitor had gone, taking with him an even half of the deer. Speed carefully struck a match, and held it low over the man's print in the snow. It was the same mark as they had seen before—a mukluk print, more clearly defined. Fresh though it was, however, they found it difficult to trace in the timber, not merely because of the darkness and falling snow, but because the man had a remarkably light tread, and had chosen every rock, or root or low trailing spruce bough that might make it less visible.

"I'm a Siwash," Speed muttered finally, "if that ain't the imaginary native Drew's patrolman's been puzzlin' over."

"Did you see him?"

"Just a glimmer when I got up from the fire. He stole in to unhook a piece of deer meat from the tree. When I caught the movement, he stood stockstill for a second. A log in the fire turned over, or sparked, and I got a dim flash of him and the rifle that covered us. I ain't guessin', Bud, when I say we'll never be nearer the end of our trail than we've just been. Right up to when we spoke of Pete."

"Could you tell what he looked like?"

"On'y had that one sight of him before I reached for the sky. The next second he'd slid back into the dark. He was tallish, but built light; wore native furs with some kind of bead pattern on the uppers of the mukluks. Black hair with a sort of gray cowlick just where the parka hood met it, though I wouldn't swear to that. Black stubble on his chin. A hungry, cruel face that looked older than the rest of him, but what you'd call handsome in a kind of way. Desperate and cool at the same time; that's what kept my hands in the air. I couldn't see his eyes. They were deep folded, the way a man's eyes get from starin' through snow or sunlight."

In spite of the remarkable detail that Speed had caught in one glimpse, or perhaps because of it, Maitland had a vague sense that he was withholding something.

"And that's the prospector Pete was looking for?"

"If you can figure it."

"Why does he wear native furs and moccasins?"

"Because no one's so likely to trail a Siwash. He wears 'em for the same reason he chooses snowy weather to travel in."

"To cover a gold secret, you mean?" The suggestion Rose had given him was sharper than ever in Maitland's mind.

"Dunno," Speed pondered. "They's somethin' more behind this prospector than it's likely either of us can figure."

"He seems to have been out of grub. Saw you shoot the caribou, perhaps?"

"He might have been trailin' the caribou when I shot it, or have been layin' for game at the river mouth. It's a likely caribou crossin'." Speed spoke absently, perplexed, it appeared, by another question. "Funny what he said about the dog. It looked starved, too. The man might have waited around here for Owens till his grub give out. Not much game in the region. Nowhere to get it without uncoverin' his trail. Maybe he tried to kill the dog to feed the rest of his team, and it got away lamed. It was alone when it stalked the deer."

Since the man had been waiting for Owens, it was evident that Pete had missed him, possibly because of his strange practises of obscurity or because only Owens had known where to meet him.

"The poor kid didn't have much to live on," Maitland said. "I wonder where he is?"

Speed shook his head and relapsed into long reflection.

"Pete strings with queer company, don't he, for the kind of kid he is? Like you saw his warm blooded mare stringin' with range cayuses. Game, but not built to go the wild route this man travels."

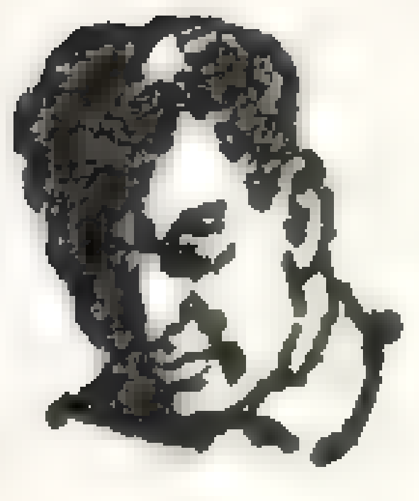
They gathered, too, that the man with the mukluks had gone in search of Pete, and that seemed the last they were likely to hear of him.

But the next day brought an odd reminder. The lamed and starving malamute they had seen trailed the scent of the caribou in the sled. Its following them instead of the man it knew gave a grim color to Speed's idea about the cruel necessity to which he had been driven. It looked like a famished and fear haunted wolf. Yellow eyes and a tinge of yellow in its guard fur increased its haggard appearance by daylight. Darkness brought it nearer, when they built their fire.

"You fed it," Speed said accusingly, and Maitland admitted having thrown it some strips of frozen meat.

It was still with them when they broke camp. Now, however, instead of lagging behind, it limped ahead of the team, as if it felt that to be more nearly its rightful position. The distance it held concealed the cause of its lameness, whether this came from a trail bruise or an icicle it couldn't lick out, or a bullet burn. If they had acquired a dog, it was a remote and apparently useless kind of possession.

On reaching the place they had chosen for a Winter camp, they set aside their best timber to season for the boat, and notched the logs for a cabin and lean-to before bringing their outfit down from Tagish.



SPEED appeared to avoid the subject of their strange encounter with the man who wore native furs, almost as if he interpreted in a literal way his promise to forget having seen or heard the man, and as if the agreement precluded talk with his partner. He hardly said another word about gold—which shot so furtive a glimmer through the mystery—though his very silence about it gave it stronger color.

In the midst of their work they were interrupted by a surprise visit from a mounted patrolman, who came up the creek gulch on foot, leaving his horse on the river trail.

"My name's Cathcart," said the corporal stiffly.

It was their first glimpse of Drew's new man. He was a tall, raw boned, fresh colored rookie with frosty eyes, rather narrowly set. The eyes, bulging jaws and pinched mouth gave his face a look of intense penetration, which seemed to be a combination of physical accident and studied intention. He was unevenly brisk, like a mechanism not yet worn into its grooves, and had a disturbing habit of lowering his brows while talking.

"This is an out-of-the-way place for a camp," he pronounced, looking sharply at the whipsaw and the timber fragments as if he suspected them as accessories to some gruesome mystery.

"We chose it so we could launch a boat below the rapids," Maitland explained politely, feeling that some of this pursy officialism was just the defensive armor of inexperience.

"It's invisible from the river trail," Cathcart jerked out.

Maitland had not noticed this fact, and so said nothing.

"You men have just made a haul for Inspector Drew that took you by way of Lake Lebarge," said Cathcart.

He lowered his brows at Speed with a keen stare which conveyed the effect awkwardly, and it was to be hoped, unintentionally that he disapproved of Drew's choice of a courier.

"That's so," Speed assented.

"Did you see anything between here and Thirty Mile of a lone Siwash on the trail?"

Speed's eyes narrowed a little in their turn.

"No," he said.

Cathcart frowned thoughtfully.

"No Siwash tracks?" he inquired.

"No," was Speed's calm answer. "No Siwash tracks."

The patrolman looked quickly around their camp.

"Let me see your guns."

He examined Speed's and handed them back; then picked up the carbine and looked through the muzzle after sticking a corner of paper in the breach to catch the light.

"This gun's been used recently," he said.

"We shot a caribou down on Lake Lebarge," said Speed. "Maybe you saw the blood dust."

The patrolman seemed discountenanced for a moment.

"It was snowing when I passed, but the blackened crystals still showed through . . . You have the carcass?" he demanded.

"And the hide," Speed said, producing it. "We saved the bladder, too, for a window light."

Cathcart chewed his lip.

"All right," he said abruptly, and took his departure.

The two partners stared after him and then exchanged a long, unsmiling look.

"If snow was falling when he reached the caribou's bloodstain," Maitland said, "the tracks where we camped would be covered."

"Maybe," Speed assented. And then said, as a passing reflection, "Where's the dog?"

But the malamute seemed to have vanished at the first scent of the patrolman's approach.

"This feller Cathcart is some mistracked in his mind about the supposed Siwash," Speed added soberly, "but

Drew has him wrong."

"Drew didn't say anything about him," Maitland recalled, "except that he was a new man."

"Anyway, his bein' green makes him look some dumber than he is. He's got sand; the police seen that, I reckon, when they hired him. Maybe he has a lot more brains than they figure. The kind of mind that keeps millin' round in a kind of fog till it feels sure ground; then makes a leap that leaves clever men starin'."

"It may be awkward if he tells Drew he suspects us of lying about those tracks."

"He won't," said Speed, confidently. "Not with the face he's got, and Drew kind of smilin' at him. I'll bet he don't say a word. But he'll hang on to that vanishin' Siwash theory till he gets the truth of it. What'll happen then, I dunno."

CHAPTER XII

OUT OF THE STORM

THROUGH a sheeted, screaming chaos that shattered into white dust around him, Maitland fought up the creek canyon, careful of the unconscious burden on his shoulder, though her very brain was numb. The blizzard seared his eyes and lungs; the fury of an April blizzard, surpassing the wildest storms of the Winter that was nearly past. That he had found his way through it at all, he owed to the dog. The "no-account Siwash" dog they called Rusty had more than proved its worth. Linked to his arm by a rawhide leash and only a yard ahead of him, it was almost invisible in a spray of snow. Behind him dragged the horse to which the malamute's nose had led him—Pete's black mare, turned white with ice. The mare pulled wearily, as if her feet were marble, pedestaled in the freezing snow.

He stumbled against the boat and, surer of his bearings now, tugged the mare into the lee of the cabin wall, where it joined a brush webbed cliff. Then he groped through the drift that smoked against the door, till he found it and entered.

He lowered Pete cautiously into the bunk and tore the mittens from the stiff hands with his teeth. He had to scrub his fingers in the drift before they had life enough to hold matches and light the lamp. His slowness maddened him.

Slipping a tarpaulin under the still figure, and with a scooped bucket of snow ready, he cut the riding boots down the seams with a razor-keen pocket knife, unrolled the socks and ripped through the seams of other garments to remove them.

The form he revealed brought no astonishment from him; in lifting it out of the snow mound which the storm whitened mare stood over, he had divined the truth. It was as beautifully modeled as a figure of the snow queen—colorless as a statue except for the glint of the golden head in the lamplight. The adolescence of the slim, athletic figure had concealed the strange fact that Pete was a girl!

Covering her with snow, he rubbed the crystals against her flesh, his fingers tense with the fear that he was too late. He renewed the friction tirelessly on her arms and feet. Her chafed skin began to show a tinge of color that warmed his heart like the return of his own blood. She could not have lain long where she had fallen in the storm.

The golden head stirred at last on the pillow. Long lashes quivered; gray eyes opened and looked dimly around the cabin. Meeting his, they became hazy, as at something her mind could not grasp. But in that half-conscious moment, her fingers moved numbly to clutch the cover, she bit her lip to stifle a moan—a poignant token of pain to her and relief to him. The quickness of the reaction was a proof that the danger he most feared was past.

Outside he picked up the mare, half buried in lashing drift, and stabled her with the team. There was plenty of feed in the barn, thanks to a Winter's hauling for Drew, and of wood in the cabin. The storm itself presented no ominous problem.

But his discovery about Pete had thrown his mind into an odd turmoil. Her wearing boy's clothes in the outdoor life she led was natural enough; it was her naturalness among men that had made them deceiving. Her being a girl, however, deeply altered the question of her relation to the people with whom his thoughts had connected her. Why had she taken the trail at such a time? April was the blizzard season; also it was near the thaw, and she seemed to have been trailing out from somewhere down the river, when the storm caught her. Had she missed that elusive and mysterious man in furs?

She was still sleeping, with a restless fever, when he reentered the cabin. The delicate undercurl of her lip trembled at times like a dreaming child's. Snow thrashed on the caribou membrane window and filled the room with a queer drumming, responsive to the roaring blast through the canyon and to the shriek of bending timber on the cliffs—the whistling upper reeds of a vast unearthly melodeon.

Suddenly, as he watched her, and as that wild howl rose high and shrill, she started up, her eyes fixed in a stricken stare at the door. It rattled draftily in the wind. When she swayed, he caught and held her, smoothing the golden curls back from her eyes, till with a look of recognition she came awake and drew a long, uneven breath. An undirected rage surged through him at whoever had caused that nightmare. But perhaps it was fever, or a light headed reaction from the trail.

"It's all right, matey," he assured her. "Only the storm."

"No one could travel through it, could they?" she asked, with an effect of suspense as strange as the question.

"No," he said, wondering. He hazarded the further assurance, "Even in clear weather you couldn't see this cabin from the river trail. It's more than hidden now."

She detached herself with a contrite murmur.

"I'm a heap of trouble, Bud . . . How did you find me?"

HE HAD been finishing work on the boat, a little before the storm broke, when Rusty, on a bank above him, sniffed the air as if he had caught something other than a game scent. The dog usually vanished at the scent of game or the approach of a stranger, and could detect either at a great distance. Curious, Maitland had leashed him in a squaw hitch with a length of rawhide he was using for a spar lashing, and had given him his head till they found the mare in a storm swept ravine, out of the river canyon. Rusty had an interest in horses—perhaps as a forbidden article of diet. He was tied to the boat now, in case of further need for him in the storm, though Maitland did not mention this.

"Where's your partner, Bud?"

"I think he went up to the new station at Whitehorse. The police are shorthanded; Drew keeps us busy in bad weather. Speed felt the blizzard coming, but wanted me to stay here and get the boat ready. This is probably the last storm before the thaw."

After a silence she said—

"I'll have to travel as soon as it dies."

"Where?"

"Outside, I reckon."

"But why, Pete? If it's because you need—"

She shook her head in troubled reserve.

"I made some money this Winter cookin' for a rafters' outfit down on the Teslin. I don't need any."

"Homesick, maybe?"

She smiled a little.

"I guess you always like the place you remember since you were small."

Even that wasteland of alkali and sage had its wonder; from one quaintly vivid touch of description he caught a glimpse of a desert valley, through which the Summer wind lost its fever and swept cool and sweet, dappling the white dust with leafy shadows, or at night, when the stars lighted up, bathing it in dreams.

She seemed to have spent her childhood with Bill Owens on some grazing claim. Her only kinsman was a prospector Owens had grubstaked, years ago, to go North.

"Bill said I wouldn't remember him—"

She broke off as if she had been drawn, against her will, into some dangerous drift of memory.

Doubtful whether the question were wise, he asked her—

"Did you ever meet the prospector in the North?"

"I—" Her hand seemed to brush some vision from her eyes. "I don't know, Bud—my head's kind of jumbled." Her look of confused apology touched him none the less because he could not fathom it. He was reminded of her haunted look when she wakened to the blizzard's scream. "I won't ever find him, now."

It had been in his mind to tell her of his and Speed's meeting with the man in furs on Lake Lebarge in November, but the subject was disturbing and the little he could tell would be better, perhaps, unsaid. He wondered if she had suffered some illusion or twist of memory from exhaustion on the trail.

"Anyway, you're safe here, Pete. By the time you're able to travel, we'll figure something better for you than going out."

"No, Bud," she said unhappily. "I shouldn't have talked so much. Please don't puzzle about it."

He did puzzle over it, however, as he wove some rawhide lines for the boat. Instead of solving the raveled question of helping her, he picked up a complicating strand he had almost forgotten—Speed's immutable taboo.

The blizzard raged through the next day, imprisoning them in a way which neither found awkward or irksome. There was an inexplicable charm for Maitland in this companionship, and he was reluctant to think that it would end with the storm. As Pete recovered, she insisted on taking charge of the cooking—an occupation that seemed to work a happy improvement in her spirits. She had a gift of finding springs of pleasure in simple things. Only at times her eyes would darken over some thought too severe for the gallant sheathing of her boyish manner, and she would stand listening fatefully to the storm.

They were clearing the table after supper when the door, against which the snow had been banked firmly for hours, shook again with a heavier tremor. The latch cord strained, lifting the bar from its groove. Some pans slid from Pete's hands to the table.

The door swung open in a blast of fog and darkness, almost quenching the lamp and sweeping cold needles through the room. A tall figure sloughed through the drift on the threshold and forced the door shut.

"Cathcart!" Maitland murmured by a kind of divination, removing a sheltering hand from the lamp.

As the wick sputtered alive, its light twinkled over a silver frosting that covered the corporal's face and furs with weird glitter. Brushing some of this mask away, he removed his gloves and slapped them together. His wintry eye, traveling from Pete around the room, fixed on Maitland with a quizzical stare.

"Bad trailing weather, isn't it?" Maitland commented, after an awkward pause.

He noticed a pair of snowshoes the corporal had dropped by the door as he entered. Cathcart's traveling through the storm seemed to indicate a reason of special urgency.

But his remark went unanswered. Declining an invitation to supper with a curt shake of his head, the corporal sat down in a corner of the room away from the stove.

PETE picked up the pans she had dropped and quietly put them away, watched from the shadow by the officer's keen cold eyes. There was another bleak tension of silence, which he did not break. It became ominous, as if it were intentional, and they were being watched for some nervous, betraying gesture. The uncertainty caused by Speed's absence sent sharp conjectures chasing through Maitland's mind.

"Is that your dog outside?" Cathcart asked finally.

"Yes." Maitland frowned.

"Where did you get it?"

"We picked it up on the trail—a stray."

"When?"

"About the time we first met you."

"Why haven't I seen it before?"

"It's shy of strangers. You may have seen its track and taken it for a wolf's."

After an expressionless interval, the corporal looked pursily at Pete and demanded—

"How long have you been here?"

"Since the storm," Maitland supplied, when Pete faltered over her answer.

Cathcart's eyes followed Pete's fingers, which were crimping a cloth she held, and then rose quickly to her face.

"Where were you going when the storm broke?"

"To Skagway," Pete said. "From a camp near the Teslin."

"You came North, didn't you, with a man named Owens, who was drowned at Skagway?"

Pete nodded.

"I understand Owens planned to meet a prospector in the Yukon."

"I think so."

"You think so? Where is the prospector now?"

"I don't know," Pete said, in a bated tone.

"You don't know where his camp is in the Yukon?"

"No, sir," Pete answered more firmly.

"Didn't Owens ever tell you?"

"No, sir. Bill never told me much of anything about the prospector."

Cathcart lowered his brows, and there was a long silence, which Maitland broke by asking:

"Have you seen my partner—Speed? At Whitehorse?"

"Not there," said the patrolman, in a cryptic rumble, as if the words meant "missing". "He's gone."

"Gone! Where?"

"I have no orders to discuss the point."

Maitland racked his brain to account for this. He had heard that a gold shipment was being relayed by dog sled from Dawson to the coast. It was just possible that Drew, in some emergency, was using Speed to run the last lap from Whitehorse over the pass. That would give the police a cause for reticence. Cathcart, too, had always shown a disapproval of Drew's confidence in them, and the trust would be great, if the surmise were true. But the tone of the words was disquieting.

"Didn't he leave any message?"

"He said you were not to worry—" Cathcart put an accent of irony on this—"till you hear from him."

"Is that all?" Maitland queried.

"That's all."

The corporal rose and put on his gloves.

"Where are you going now?" Maitland felt impelled to ask.

"To Lake Lebarge and the Lewes, if I can make my patrol in the wave of the blizzard. Sometimes it takes a storm to uncover what the storm hides. Some strange things have happened along this deserted trail, Mr. Maitland. During storms. And it's been one of the stormiest Winters on record. I wouldn't like to startle you in this wild weather by mentioning that murder has been done. But perhaps you feel no cause to be concerned?"

He studied them through a long, immobile silence.

"No," said Maitland coldly.

Cathcart appeared to crumble and sluice that deliberate word of negation. After a space, he moved toward the door, picked up the snowshoes and carefully knocked them together several times to clear them of ice. He lifted his head to regard his observers with another silent stare. Then he opened the door a foot or two, and slid out sidewise into the storm.

Barring the door, Maitland turned to meet a tortured question in Pete's eyes. The cabin had a strange effect of quiet, though the wind was still sending its restless surf over the roof.

CHAPTER XIII

WANTED

THE cell of the Skagway jail was a plain, thick studded box, except for a small grilled vent in the seaward wall, and a cot along the side, on which Speed was sitting, inwardly raw with chagrin. Outwardly he wore an air of composure for the benefit of the heavily armed guard in the passage beyond the grated cell door. The jail fronted on a snowy side lane above the beach, its rear part supported by unstripped logs that rose like a clump of timber out of a snowdrift, giving the whole structure a discouraging effect of solidity. So much he had noticed when the marshal's bloodstained deputies dragged him up the lane from the main street.

To have been arrested on the straw charge of having killed the shell dealer in this camp last Fall was bad enough, but he had not discerned the real teeth in the trap until Fallon walked into the marshal's office, just before he was committed to the cell. He could still see the mocking, vindictive smile in the steel-blue eyes, and hear it in the booming voice that asserted, "I'm said to have a good memory." Certainly the trick was Fallon's.

Now when he thought of his dog team still waiting by the warehouse wharf, and of Drew waiting at Tagish for the precious mail and the sled load of freight he was to bring back, it was all he could do to refrain from getting up and kicking the wall. The worst bite in his mind was not the treachery or the injustice of the charge, legally tenable though it was, but his own carelessness in having walked into the trap unguarded. Such as Skagway might be, it was his kind of camp; the more inexcusable his lapse from vigilance. A Winter in strongly policed territory must have dulled him. He had assumed that Fallon was down the river—no excuse. Fallon could have wished for no better opportunity, no more perfect set of circumstances than he now commanded for revenge.

The blizzard had caused a disruption in Drew's mail service at a crucial time when the inspector was short of a driver. A sled shipment of gold was to be run to Skagway, and a packet of mail brought back, containing a considerable amount of bank currency consigned to Dawson against the gold. Drew's choice of a substitute courier had been good gambling. Speed knew that life had left marks on him legible enough to that veteran judge of men. Also, as the marshal had pointed out in examining him, there was no telegraph line between Dawson and Seattle—no obstacle to a getaway with the mail. The sled freight, in fact, which he was to have brought back with him, consisted of wire and equipment for a projected telegraph line between the river posts.

Obviously, Drew would never have taken that chance had Cathcart ever mentioned at headquarters his suspicion about the vanished "Siwash". It was obvious, too, that Cathcart's mistrust could have had nothing to do with the plight in which he now found himself, though it would play into the corporal's hand.

The marshal seemed to have been stung by Canadian comments on the laxity of the law in Skagway, and no doubt saw a keen retort in arresting the Mounted Police's courier on a charge of murder—while professing to question whether his papers were genuine. Fallon's opportunity.

But although Speed did not excuse himself, there were reasons, and one deep one, for his having walked unwarily into the grasp of the law. On delivering the gold to the wharf agent in Skagway, he had not been able to pick up his sled load immediately for the return trip. A ship lay in the gulf, in a twinkling flotsam of shore ice. Her arrival, delayed by the storm, was being celebrated as a harbinger of Spring and spoils. Even the shore crew was drunk, retarding still further the landing of her cargo. This delay had not seemed inconvenient. It would have been necessary to wait anyway for packed snow and night cold before attempting the ascent of the pass on the western side.

Meantime the mail was brought ashore and the agent, nervous enough at having custody of the gold, was more uneasy about the police mail—an oilskin wrapped and sealed packet of bank notes in easily portable form. His strongbox had been broken recently by thieves, and the package was presumably safer in the game pocket of Speed's coat. Facts to be read by the marshal as suggesting that Speed had stolen the regular mail runner's orders, delivered the gold to obtain the mail, and had been prevented from taking ship only by the longshore tie-up.

The strangely timed event that left him open to capture had occurred during the forced wait. With many hours to kill, he had decided to visit Steiner at what was now Skagway's General Store. There were drunken fragments of song in the street; saloon pianos were laying a shaky bridge of melody into a new day. More luring music—the click of chips on bare wood. But he had not listened to those siren voices. He found Steiner surrounded by a strangely assorted stock of merchandise—prospering by the simple plan of "buyin' low from quitters goin' out, and sellin' high to suckers comin' in."

Wealthier than if he had struck a rich placer, he claimed to deal in everything from diamonds to dynamite. Money lending was one of his gold mines, and, speaking of curious pledges, he mentioned an oddly shaped clover leaf nugget on which he had loaned the amount it weighed to a gambling client.

The hunt was on . . .

THE client wore a dicer hat and stuttered; was known as Lefty and suspected of being a pickpocket. Speed ran the man to earth in a gambling tent, where he cut into the same poker game and, dealing Lefty a hand on which the thief would willingly have bet his shirt, lured the nugget into the game on a raised pot. The shining, foliated piece of gold was weighed on the bar scales and played for twice its weight value. Speed won it with a straight flush, the play attracting the interest of many watchers—and among them, as he noted absently at the time, the fisherman, who was still in Skagway.

When Lefty disconsolately quit the table, Speed grilled him about the nugget. Under pressure, the thief admitted, and maintained the extraordinary story, that he had lifted it in Skagway from the pocket of a man now dead—the shell dealer, in fact, whom Speed had shot at the door of the Pack Train Saloon.

Disregarding a jinx in order to learn something more about Lefty, Speed had been looking for Rose when the marshal seized him. His leap through the crowd might have won him clear had it not been for an irony that put Frenchy, the fisherman, in his way. Frenchy's scramble to avoid him had the involuntary effect of a collision; the fisherman grabbed his boot and hung on, responding to the shouts of the crowd. Speed's present reflection was that Fallon and the marshal had been advised of his movements, and the fisherman bore a grudge.

That the man he was accused of murdering should be the man who had brought the nugget to Skagway was an apparently perverse loop of the influence he called luck. As a gambler, he had seen it frame too many strange combinations to feel convinced of any other relation between the facts. He could not believe that he had avenged Joe's death in killing the shell dealer—a tin horn with whom Joe would have had no dealings. More probably he had killed the only man who could have given him a clue. The shell dealer's having been near Carson City at that time explained the nugget's having come into his hands; the real killer might have been in a hurry to get rid of it.

Now it lay in the marshal's safe, along with Speed's guns and the mail.

"The Canucks complain we're wide open down here," the marshal had said, as he slammed the safe door and twirled the combination. "So we'll set an example. I don't know how you and your partner stand with them; but they'll have to thank us, and be glad to get their mail, when they learn it's for cold blooded murder on this side."

Speed's breath smoked in the cold cell. Occasionally the unapproachable guard got up to stamp his feet. They had freed the prisoner's hands and hadn't troubled to remove his gun belt—signs that pointed to brief imprisonment and swift judgment, though this was his second day in jail. Some one he could not see brought food on a bar tray. The guard passed it in. Bread and water and a dried herring. He ate the bread, but the memory of that two weeks' fish diet on the *Susette* was still with him.

When he stretched himself on the couch, he felt the effect of the days of sleep he had lost, and trailed fanciful notions into the half conscious borderland in which men accustomed to danger learn to take their rest.

Sounds and silences dimly informed his ear while he rested. The marshal had gone out, perhaps to join the carnival announced by the mammoth sign on the warehouse. This jamboree was tuning up early, and his guard appeared to grow restless at the festive piano jingle from the camp.

Speed was roused, not by that crude music, but by the haunting melody of a deep toned guitar, beautifully played. The song that welled from the strings was one he knew—a song composed by some lone rider of the desert ranges to the wind, the rolling sage and the sky.

But the magic of the player's fingers blended its rhythm with the sea swell, muting it to the tone of taut ropes singing and the faint far peal of bells, and weaving through it the fluent, questing plaint that stirs the blood of desert and sea rover alike. He listened, hardly breathing, till it stopped, and then the raucous jangle of pianos, which he had somehow not heard while the guitar was playing, broke unpleasantly on his ear again.

The music lingered in his mind; he was still hearing it when the discordant noise of revelry suddenly swelled louder, with the opening of the outer jail door. He heard the noise muffle again as the door closed. Then a woman's lowered voice talking with the marshal, and the clink of a globe as a lamp was lighted in the corridor. He caught a fragment of the woman's talk.

"—To see him alone, Marshal. He isn't so dangerous."

The marshal sounded convivial and rather thick tongued.

Their voices sank, but presently the guard was summoned away from his place by the guarded door and went clanking down the passage. A shadow came toward the place he had left. Strange portent, that Rose, for whom Speed had been looking when he was caught, had come to find him.

THIS eyes met hers through the bars for a wordless moment. He had never guessed how beautiful she was, or how her gypsy grace could be heightened by light and color. The sea mist had caught in tiny brilliants on her dark curls; touched her black lashes with a natural mascara, and her cheeks with rose. A silk gown of pale rose glimmered from under her fur coat, which was held closed by the strap of a guitar—the first detail his look had strayed to. She was also immaculate, which some belles of the mining camps were not.

Her ornaments were simple and few: a diamond-set bangle on her wrist and a rose-like fastening in her hair. Though he could not have expressed the comparison, she had the glamorous, piquant quality of loveliness sometimes seen in portraits from the romantic past, which invoke a sense of rose leaves and stringed music.

"This time you can't avoid seeing me," she said. And, drawing no answer, she added, "But if you'll trust me now, I can give you a chance. The trick has been hard to set—but it will be dark. If you're lucky enough to win clear and into the pass—"

"I've heard of men bein' give a chance to break jail and get shot," Speed commented dryly.

Rose glanced down the passage and leaned close to the grating. She half drew from the pocket of her furs a beautiful blue metal Colt, showing the cylinder fully loaded.

"Does that look like a bluff?"

Speed's fingers itched for the clean grip of the pistol stock. It was a powerful temptation, but he said—

"Reckon I'll pass the play, lady."

Her look was incredulous.

"You might reach the Yukon before them. As far as the Stewart, maybe. North of there is an untracked range where eyes as keen as yours might find a trail. There's just a chance."

"There's cases, too," mused Speed, "where a man with his neck in a phantom noose is offered some devilish bargain to fill a short hand for the law. Or to do some real crime."

"The noose you're in is no phantom," Rose said. "The track you left might be."

"You figure—" Speed played a perilous card to lure a return—"that a man born to hang can't be drowned?"

"If you're thinking of Bill Owens," she challenged thoughtfully, "he doesn't owe his death to me. Even if he did—Well, he's dead now, so I won't say it."

"I wasn't thinkin' of Bill, special. But I reckon he was some way good, or Pete wouldn't of been trailin' with him."

At mention of Pete's name her eyes imperceptibly hardened, with an expression difficult to define, as she made no answer.

"Anyhow," Speed concluded, "he's dead."

"Owens died of fear," she said strangely, "if I can read any man's face. Are you afraid?" There was a curious taunt in the question.

"Afraid—sure. Of some things. I win a clover leaf nugget from your soft-shoe man, Lefty. He says he lifted it off the shell rigger who laid for me last Fall. I'm lookin' for you to get a line on your rustler, when I'm jailed for shootin' that alley rat. It all rings bad."

She looked surprised, as by something she hadn't known. She took time to consider it and him.

"Lefty isn't my 'rustler', as you call it. But what was there about the nugget that made you curious?"

"I'll cover," said Speed, after a pause. "I ain't so sure you didn't come here to make me talk."

Their eyes held in a long stare—wise, disillusioned eyes, skilled in reading, schooled in concealing. The revolver slipped back into Rose's pocket.

"I can't help you," she said coldly. "You doubt me too much. It would have cost me a big risk to get you clear."

Lingering just a moment, she was gone. He heard her voice down the corridor, in brief murmured conversation with the marshal. The outer door let in a tide of dance music and clicked shut. Then the guard returned to the grating.

Speed relapsed on the cot, lost in a puzzle. Without a shadow of regret over his refusal, he regretted having spoken too directly—when he might have learned more by saying less.

Through this long abstraction, he did

not notice the darkening of the cell, or the wilder music that sounded from the camp, until a reopening of the street door made him aware of both. All his senses had been whetted to a fine edge, and his nose caught the smell of fish even before his ear detected something vaguely familiar about the tread in the passage, and before his sight could penetrate the gloom.

"Take it in yourself," the guard growled testily to the shadow.

The heavy grated door was unlocked. As the figure edged into the cell, Speed understood why he had been trying to place its footfall. He was confronted by Frenchy, carrying a plate, and curving his chest to make a shining badge on it more formidably prominent.

Speed bit his cheek as he glanced at the plate.

"Well, you're a nice one, Frenchy," he commented mildly. "So they give you a deputy's star. Looks good on you, too."

The ex-fisherman squirmed a little, not quite able to stand firm with that even voice in his ears.

"You don't forget, neither, do you, Frenchy?" his prisoner said, eyeing the fish and then a knife hilt in the fisherman's belt, on which the free hand had closed. "Are you the marshal's sticker?"

Narrow black eyes beaded with a rankling hate which only blood could quench, as the cool gray ones of his defenseless prisoner lifted to his face.

The pause grated on the impatient guard at the door.

"Back out of there, frog, with them plates, before he takes your knife and carves ye."

"Reckon this feller don't know who he's callin', Frenchy," Speed observed, as the fisherman backed an involuntary step or two. "Tell him what you done to Horse McGinnis of Spokane. Tell him you could lick ten half baked deputies like him with one foot."

An oath from the guard showed that Frenchy's promotion to office was not popular with the marshal's squad. He swung the door, and hooked the fisherman with a boot toe to speed his exit. In that finely measured instant, Speed jumped for the door.

"Hit him, Frenchy!" he shouted.

With a swift, spasmodic jerk, the tray and its contents were hurled against the wall, as Frenchy lashed out in response at the astounded guard.

Speed reached the corridor in a bound. A gun blazed out of the dark tangle, but he was already clear of the passageway and into the street.

CHAPTER XIV

MAN HUNT

HE HAD a fleeting glimpse of dusky shadows, blue against the snow, and camp lights flaring in long crystal lanes over the caked drifts in the street.

Two strides along the trod path in front of the jail brought him to the side wall; a long leap down the bank sank him out of sight in a fluffy snow mound by the log pilings.

Through this muffling blanket he could hear dimly a confused shouting and rush of feet. There was no search for tracks in the trampled lane. He heard the marshal's thick voice mouthing orders that sent the hunt farther afield, confident that the fugitive would put space between himself and the jail as fast as he could travel.

Speed lay still, measuring the tune and distance of the waning voices. The mere hope of escape did not tempt him at all; he was playing for escape on certain difficult, almost impossible terms.

At what seemed a favorable moment, he twisted cautiously through the snow and under the supporting timbers of the jail. Using these for cover, he climbed the bank till he was forced out by the pinching angle between it and the floor beams. Then he squirmed up the base of the side wall, where the roof's slight overhang had left a snow trough, till he could see the street and the surrounding tents. There was no one in sight, though the dusk had made his view obscure.

He crossed the street at a checked pace; then laid a running course at hazard through a maze of silent tents. Avoiding the back flare of light from the Golden Pass Saloon, and undetected as yet, so far as he could tell, he reached the rear of Steiner's boarded tent.

The canvas between the frame and the rafters was dark. He reached above the cross beam, cut a slit in the canvas and, climbing through the aperture, dropped inside.

The interior of the tent was vaguely illuminated by a filtered, wavering glow from the street it faced. Groping through a weird litter of stock, he found a lantern on the counter, lighted it and turned the wick just high enough to shed a murky glimmer.

The jangling pianos and their mad, bad tunes and the laughter and tumult of the reveling camp were strangely distinct in this still enclosure. Voices and footsteps sounded close; grotesque shadows loomed against the tent and passed; but Speed was conscious of them only in pauses. His eyes were roving swiftly through the chaos of Steiner's merchandise in quest of a certain kind of box. Rummaging uncovered a pinch bar of handy size. In a drawer he found some six-shooters that said little for Steiner's judgment of firearms, but he quickly picked out a .45 and loaded it.

Still the object of his search eluded him. He was beginning to think that the Jew had done some idle boasting, when his eyes fell on a longish box in a far corner, under a shelf. He pulled it out and, delicately prying it open with the bar, put his fingers inside. With a grunt of relief he removed the cover and took out two sticks of dynamite.

Each second was ticking away his small margin of hope for success in the desperate job he had set for himself, but he fused and capped the sticks with painstaking care. Putting them inside his shirt, he pushed them down so that they were held firm by the pressure of his belt. Then, a menace to himself and anything he knocked against, he extinguished the lantern and felt his way out of the tent.

As he dropped in the snow and paused to listen, his skin prickled with a sense of some lurking presence close by. He gripped the pinch bar; a premature shot would sever the fragile thread of luck on which his plan depended. His eye sketched for a moment the course he would follow, for with stakes and guy ropes spreading snares in the snow, one fall would be enough. But now he was checked by a faint, nearby crunching sound that did not associate with the impersonal fugue of noises from the camp. He heard a low whistle, hardly audible, but close.

Speed backed tensely against the angle of the tent wall. In the next instant, his hand streaked out and clutched a man by the throat. Another instant would have brought the pinch bar crashing down on the man's skull, but a dicer hat on the head stayed his hand. His fist wedged the chin up and brought the face into view. The eyes of his captive pleaded mutely for a chance to speak.

Slightly loosening his grip, Speed waited grimly.

"D-d-d-d-don't hit me," the man protested in a hoarse whimper. "I'm f-f-for you."

Speed pulled him out of possible earshot of a tent.

"What you track me for? Talk fast!"

Lefty gasped, struggled with halted syllables.

"I s-seen you prowl into Jew's t-t-tent and get d-dynamite. Don't try it!"

Speed lost his own voice. The thief had guessed his purpose. Could have given the alarm, but hadn't . . .

Lefty caught his arm.

"L-let me case this trick," he whispered huskily. "You wouldn't have a chance in a m-m-million with dynamite. I ain't g-guessin'. L-l-lost me nerve b-blowin' a job. But I s-seen that safe once. With a few minutes I could f-f-feel the c-combination."

"What's in it for you?" Speed demanded.

"I owe the m-marshal a b-b-black eye. G-give me the bar. You watch the street and g-g-give a r-rumble if—"

The man had either to be silenced or trusted. Speed made the gamble.

"Come on," he said.

They reached the lane of the jail undiscovered, and there, with all the torture of forced inaction, Speed watched the thief glide to the door, hover a moment over the lock, and then pass through it like a ghost.

He could hear no sound but the shore swell and the strident thrumming of the camp, but his nerves had other intimations. Minutes dragged by, before a distant trampling began to pound his ears. It came from the beach, where the slope of the frozen sea bank made footsteps more resonant than on the flats. A party combing the shore, where the boats were a suggestive way of escape. They were coming back.

Would Lefty never show? Voices echoed through the surf wash now with the sudden distinctness of sounds that come up from the sea on a steep shore; the boots on the gravel beat louder. He had promised to give Lefty the last minute. His own pulse had a jarring throb; he wondered at the steadiness of this underworld outcast who had "lost his nerve". . . But he had made the gamble, and he let it ride.

Those sounds were deceptive. One of the posse came over the beach crown a minute sooner than he had counted on. Too soon for Lefty—the door was still shut.

Speed raised the gun to draw them. It spat flame with a stunning roar.

For a priceless second he was numb, half blinded, holding what was left of the burst revolver. Frost in the barrel —he should have thawed it . . .

And in that dazed second the pack was on him. He leaped to cover a breath ahead of the volley that sang through the tents.

Ducking through an empty tent, he squirmed out again under the back flap, with the dim hope of doubling on his track and finding Lefty. But as he had surmised before, it was not his lucky night.

Still dizzy, his second turn almost threw him into the muzzle of a wise hunter who had stood quiet while the rest were beating the cover. Swerving to dodge a bullet, Speed tripped on a guy rope, lost his footing, and pitched headlong to the snow.

The last thing he knew was the writhing twist he gave his body so as to land on his shoulder. Then fire flared in his head, and the snow went black.

He was still on his shoulder when he became conscious, but lying trussed and gagged on dry ground, staring at the shadow his body threw on an inside tent wall from a lantern behind him.

Vaguely at first he heard the voices of two men talking in the tent. One was Fallon's.

"—like smoke from a dead fire. Pete's headed for the coast, though, and can be stopped here."

The words were so unintelligible that Speed's head, throbbing from the jar of its encounter with the tent stake, shuttled vainly to weave some pattern from them.

"Your prisoner's awake," the other voice warned Fallon.

"Let him hear," the Nevadan said carelessly. "I always figured him and his pardner was playin' in with Pete for a reason. I could fix them both with the Mounties, but there's a simpler way. The camp's primed for it, and the marshal has his jack. He said once I couldn't rope him."

"You mean you're—?"

THE Golden Pass Saloon at Skagway was a swirling vortex of carnival. It had a slick and spacious floor, lighted by hanging lamps which depended from the cross beams of the lumber roof. Metaphorically speaking, this roof was off. Anything went—and went fast. The roulette wheels, banked round by players in deep horseshoes, divided attention for the moment with the dance orchestra, which was also fast but less concerted. A piano, banjo and accordion were in the full gallop of what sounded like a musical steeplechase, with the piano two lengths ahead, and the accordion lagging over the bars well behind the earnestly plugging banjo. They served, however, to indicate that the romping riot on the floor was sociably intended.

Corduroy, mackinaws and heavy miners' boots mingled informally with the "store clothes" of newcomers, the dapper broadcloth and varnished shoes of dandified gamblers, the interweaving silken flash and spangle of the dance girls' shortened gowns.

There were echoes in the rumbling talk around the bar of a rumor that a dangerous gunman had broken jail and tried to shoot up the camp, though most of the bar's patrons would have given mild heed to a gun battle in the street, supposing such a sound could have been audible.

In the tumult, no one, therefore, immediately noticed that a group of armed men had entered, pushing before them a hatless captive whose hands were tied behind his back. The leader of the posse commanded attention by the simple means of sending a bullet into the rafters. The music and the dancing and the play continued a little of their own momentum, like one of the wheels which had been spinning when the shot was fired; then dribbled to a halt.

"Where's the boss of this joint—Soapy Smith?" Fallon demanded in a voice that made the quiet absolute.

No one answered, or seemed to know. One glance at the posse and the prisoner had sent through the crowd, drunk and sober, an electric sense of what was impending. There was a low drone and buzz of excitement. They pressed in for a closer view of the prisoner, who was looking at the rafters. Several of them, who had come to Skagway before the Winter, recognized his face. Some one muttered—

"That's the bad actor who stopped the pack train."

"And shot the shell rigger in camp last Fall," supplied another.

"We won't keep you waitin'," said Fallon. "Ladies and gentlemen, the character of this murderous desperado is known to every miner who was on the trail in the first stampede of '97. He returns with erroneous ideas of terrorizin' the camp. Arrested for murder and mail robbin', this bandit breaks jail, steals a gun, and not on'y spills blood but is the cause of holes bein' shot in your tent roofs. We've brought him here because this roof has a strong cross beam. The ceremony won't interrupt your other pleasures for more'n three minutes."

As the crowd looked on in dead silence, the prisoner was pulled across the floor to the farther end of the dancing space, near the orchestra, where he was lifted to a table under one of the transverse roof beams. Standing there, his feet were quickly bound. A member of the posse expertly fashioned a halter loop with nine winds around the shank of a stout pack line; the other end was thrown over the beam, and the noose fitted to the captive's neck with the hondo against his ear.

Speed watched these preparations with apparent resignation. But even now his bound wrists and ankles and his eyes were covertly testing every detail in the tightening web for some remotely potential flaw. Finding none, his interest returned to the crowd. Their taunt and staring faces betrayed an almost complete suspension of thought, with here and there a flinching waver from a chechako, or a glassy grin from the bar.

A few old-timers, to whom summary hangings were familiar, looked on dispassionately. He saw Steiner standing nervously in the background, as if afraid of being remembered, and the drunken marshal propped against the bar.

Nearer, his eyes encountered those of Rose, whom he had not noticed enter. Hers were somber and impenetrable; the only eyes he could not read, and she lowered them evasively.

His roving glance came to rest on Fallon, who stood ready to send him clear.

"Still figurin' a play?" his captor taunted.

"Yes," said Speed. "One. They say a man's last look sees clear, Fallon. I ain't never tried to figure what lies over the line, but if that's so, maybe you don't check me out complete. If you frame a deal against the boy, my pardner, or lay your hands on Pete, by God, I'll follow you—dead!"

Before he could be answered, a tall man with a Van Dyke beard elbowed through the crowd and demanded—

"What's all this?"

"What's it look like?" said Fallon coolly. "We're stringin' a killer on your rafter beam."

"This camp has a marshal"—Soapy Smith frowned as he spoke—"or so I've heard."

Teetering against the bar rail, the marshal gave a gesture of importance.

"Man fights the law and the camp," said Fallon, "and can't be locked up. I don't hear a kick from the house."

Smith considered his patrons. They would follow the hanging and Speed meant nothing to him. He looked at the outlaw, and then in a deprecating way at Fallon.

"I've seen men hanged before, mister, but never in your cold blooded style. At least they'll give the offer of a last drink or a smoke. If you're goin' to hang him here, you'll have to do it regular."

Some of the old-timers voiced approval of that.

"All right," Fallon growled. "Ask him."

Smith put the question.

"If it's a choice," said Speed, "I'd think I'd like to roll a cigaret. I've got the makin's."

* * *

SMITH untied his hands and called to the bartender—

"Bring a glass of the special, Jim."

Gratefully flexing his wrists, Speed rolled a tight cigaret and was lighting it when the drink arrived in a well filled tumbler.

"I take this kind, Soapy," he said, "but I never liked to drink alone. You can use my name freely in urgin' drinks on the house. The marshal has my wad."

This sentiment was most favorably received by a number of the revelers whose thirst had outlasted their means. The discovery that the condemned man's credit was still good with Soapy created a generally good impression. Fallon bit his lip.

Curious newcomers were jamming in through the doorway, and Speed paused with the glass half drained at sight of one of them. Lefty, with a mingled look of triumph and discomfiture, answered his stare by touching a bulge in his pocket. Speed resumed his drink with a twisted grimace. So Lefty had the mail! It would have been safer in the marshal's office. Employing the deft trick of his kind in worming through crowds, the dip drew nearer. The forward press of the spectators brought Rose nearer, too. Speed met her clouded eyes again in a long study, as he emptied the glass and lowered it.

Fallon jerked it from his hand.

"Any other little thing you'd like?" he asked sardonically. "A piece of cake or somethin'?"

"They's one other thing," acknowledged Speed, still looking at Rose. "If the lady will play a song while I finish this cigaret."

Fallon wheeled, but Rose did not see his scowl.

A chord as clean and sweet as the tinkle of the wind at twilight through a desert canyon flowed from the strings under her touch, and shed an almost instant quiet on the crowd. It was the range rider's song Speed had heard before. This time there was a note of wonder in it that would have melted stone. Her voice dissolved into it—a clear, exquisite contralto, plaintive, strong and deep. Faraway the shore wash sounded through, sustained the rhythmic lapses of the song and added its eternal plaint to that echo of endless questing which was the spirit of the melody. A song for wanderers and for men who could dream—as all these prospectors could, and did, in their way.

In that beguiling, fluently riding spell of sound, Speed forgot everything, apparently, but the singer's magic. But his eyes now drifted to Lefty, who had approached quite near through the still crowd, possibly growing richer on the way.

He looked sidelong at the accordion which dangled in the hands of its bemused owner in the orchestra. Fallon, waiting ironically for the end of Rose's song, did not notice the invisible prompting. Eyes and wits less sharp than Lefty's would not have interpreted it, but he picked up the instrument and tossed it to Speed in a pass so quickly and deftly completed that the accordion chimed with the closing bar of Rose's song.

She looked up in wonder, but continued playing, and the gesture as well as the chording of the two instruments took the crowd's breath. Fallon lost his cue for a moment, and in that moment Speed had caught his audience; tickled their sense of drama or humor, released a spring. He lured Rose's song into a lighter, brisker measure, which she instinctively matched until the melody itself was subtly changed.

Here was dance music such as few camps had ever heard. The spell of Rose's song broke and dissolved like spray on a lifting wind. In its place came the lilting waggish measure of an old barn dance—mischievous, foot compelling, irresistible. Toes were tapping unconsciously; some one chuckled. A drunken miner gave a whoop and, clearing a space with a sweep of his arms, started a jig.

And as Speed swayed slightly with the playing, eyes evading the smoke that curled up from the shorting cigaret butt, his feet were just visibly weaving too—as it seemed, to the infection of his own music—but with a crafty, studied strain against the rope.

"Come on, boys," he chanted suddenly. "Take your pardners!"

The crowd was almost swept off its feet. In another moment the miracle might have been done. Lefty, with a gape of awed admiration, caught the meaning of Speed's strategy. His hands twitched with a powerless desire to help; Fallon stood between.

But Fallon came alive with a roaring curse.

"I'll make you dance, you jiggin'—!"

He made a stride for the table to kick it over

The kick, however, was not completed. The crowd had buckled and swayed inward from the door, cleaved apart by a powerful pair of shoulders, and by a dark, youthful, battling head which Speed had never hoped to see again.

The newcomer reached the hem of the circle around the table, and lunged through it.

There was a sharp crack of fist against bone, and Fallon was stiffened to his toes by a terrific driving smash to the jaw.

He rocked and went backward, but saved himself from falling by lurching on to the piano keys with a loud discord.

TO BE CONCLUDED

The CAMP-FIRE

A free-to-all meeting place for readers, writers and adventurers

LELAND S. JAMIESON, whose first story in our pages, "Distance", appears in this issue, rises to make his bow to the members of the Camp-fire.

College Park, Georgia

I was born in Oklahoma (Indian Territory) in 1904, and grew up in the small college town of Edmond, where my father was a professor by day and a dairy farmer mornings and evenings. Like most sons of scholars, I was no scholar.

Since I was fifteen I have worked more or less seriously at being a rodman on a surveyor's gang, a mule skinner, an insurance salesman and a music store clerk; have frittered away a few years in college, managed (and mismanaged) a dance orchestra in which I played trumpet very badly, learned to fly at the Air Corps Schools in San Antonio (1925), and held a second lieutenancy in the Regular Army for three years.

In 1929 I resigned the commission to write fiction, but shortly afterward I abandoned the full-time fiction job to manage a system of flying schools. Then I became operations manager of an air mail line. At present am flying night mail on various divisions of the Miami-New York route.

THERE was a time when I thought nothing could be more thrilling than to fly, whether in an airplane, airship or free balloon; and once in a great while now, when I get myself caught "blind" up in the "soup" at night and the engine spits a few times and threatens to make me jump out (I never have had to—yet), I revert very suddenly to that opinion. But most of the time it is just ordinary, prosaic, hard work, leaden with monotony: the ear-racking drum of the engine, the cramped closeness of the cockpit, the headwinds and the repeated blink of each succeeding beacon, which never will be passed, it seems, but is.

Yet I like to fly, and expect to continue. Writing, however, is more interesting. The combination of the two suits me exactly. The two greatest satisfactions I get, in the ordinary run of day-to-day living, are (1) a well-written story that pleases an editor, and (2) a tail-wind such as I had tonight, which brought me down from Richmond to Atlanta at a hundred-and-fifty miles an hour on a clear, cold night with a full moon.

—LELAND S. JAMIESON

* * *

ONE of several letters from readers anent Gordon Young's recent note in these columns on the nature of courage:

New York, N. Y.

In *Adventure* of Dec. 1st, Mr. Gordon Young issues in the Camp-fire an irresistible call for discussion, to which a very old man—past 87—offers a reply.

The vulgar story of Winkelried owes its origin to the history faking of a highly gifted Swiss writer, Johsmer von Mueller, also originator of the Tell saga. The Winkelried tale was exploded many years ago by my old friend Karl Buerkli of Zurich, who sent me an autographed copy of his pamphlet on the subject, which I in turn donated to the New York Public Library. The real facts, according to Buerkli, show that the battle of Sempach in 1386 had nothing to do with Winkelried's historic sacrifice, but that such a deed of bravery did actually occur nearly a century later, in a battle fought in Lombardy, a band of Swiss mercenaries participating. It seems rather the *esprit de corps* animating the hired fighters that prompted Winkelried, as it did the Swiss guard in the battle of the Tuilleries.

The Sempach victory was due to new tactics developed by the Swiss mountaineers. They wore no heavy armor. Their chief arms were long iron-tipped pikes and short swords. Hence their great mobility gave them advantage over slow moving armed forces in heavy armor. To this mobility is due the rise of foot soldiers, or infantry, such as the German Land-Knechte and similar formations.

By the way, David's victory over Goliath belongs to the same category, as careful reading of the Bible shows. David was a full grown man, a shepherd who had successfully fought bears and lions. He found King Saul's armament too cumbersome in his combat with the gigantic Goliath. Stick and sling as weapons enabled him to win quite a distance from his heavily armed adversary.

AS TO bravery: One of the most stirring examples I ever heard of was one that happened in a Pennsylvania coal mine some twenty-five years ago, when a poison gas explosion took place and only a part of the crew emerged from the shaft, among them a Bohemian youth of about seventeen years of age. This young worker turned back and made three trips into the poison laden mine, each time bringing out an unconscious fellow-worker, alive. For the fourth time he dived in—and never returned.

Now, who can state the motive? Is there ever any very clear definite motive when action has to be swift, without a moment's loss of time? May not there be many strings pulling, subtly, lightning-like, not conscious ever to the acting party? Talk of Freudian inhibitions and complexes—are they shedding any light on such problems of will? Search and speculate till you encounter the age-old riddle of Free Will or Necessity and Kant's Categorical Imperative and the theological concept of Sin and Virtue. Will there ever appear an Aridne offering you the leading string out of the Labyrinth?

—MOSES OPPENHEIMER

* * *

A NOTE on present day Navajo blankets:

Santa Fé, New Mexico

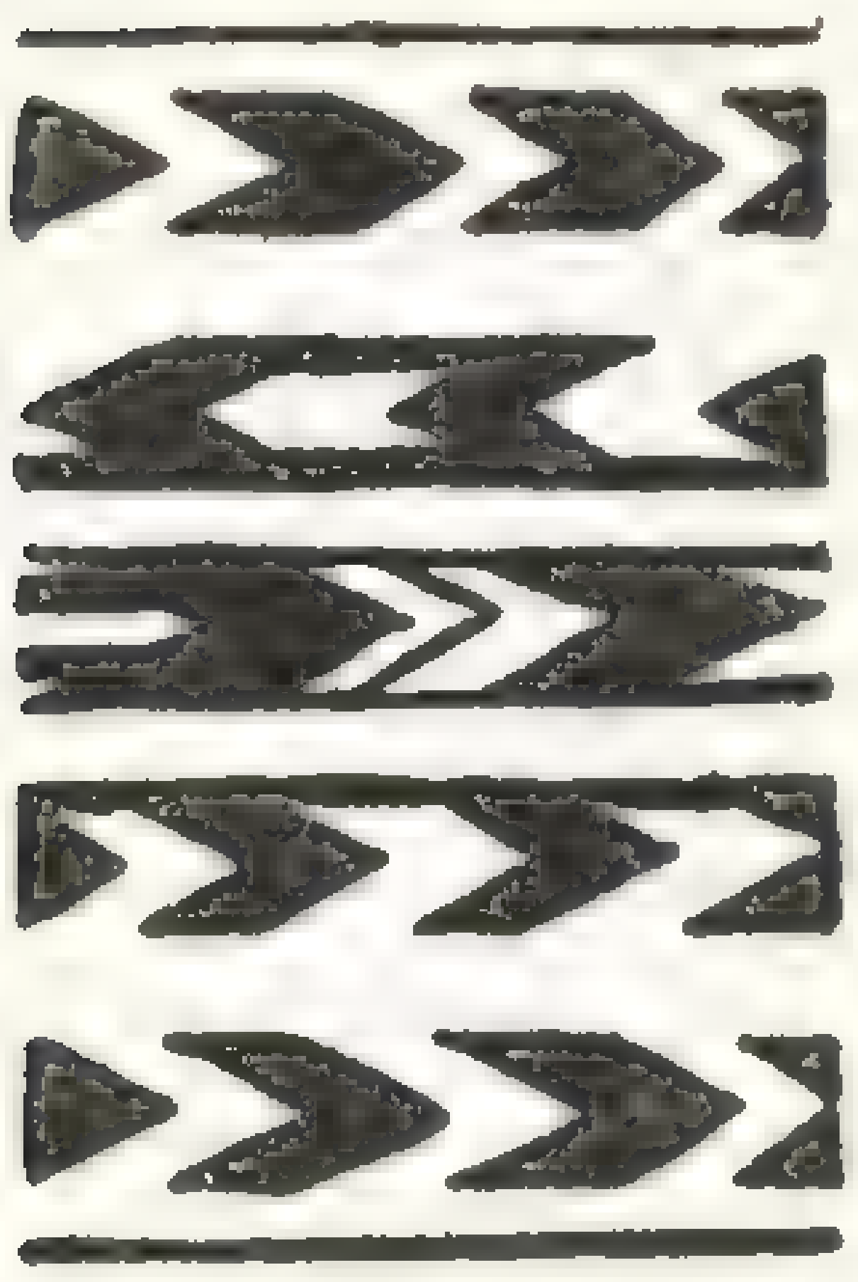
In the December first issue of *Adventure* I noticed a request from J. C. Hegenauer for information about Navajo blankets, and I believe the following might be of interest:

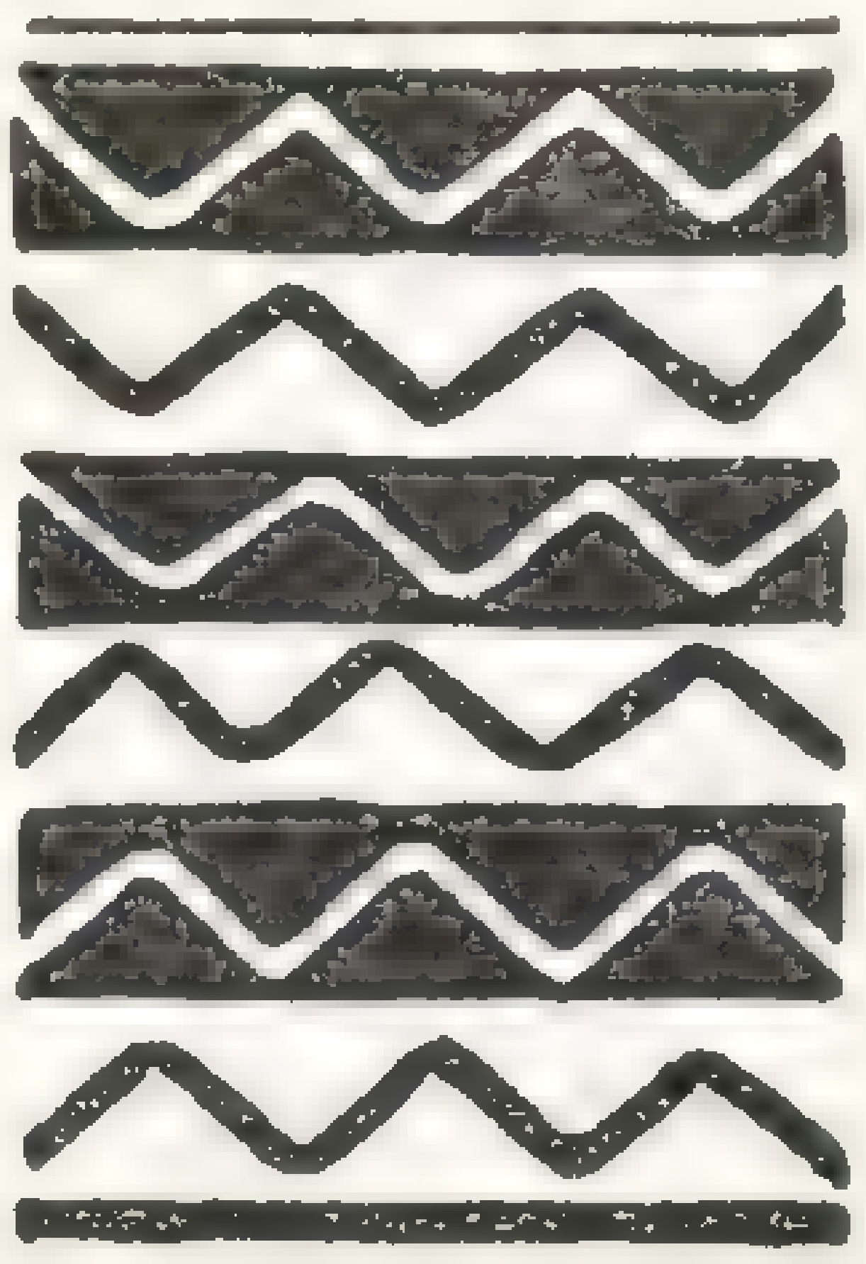
Originally the Navajo Indian wove blankets for his own use. They were soft in texture, fine in weave, and only vegetable dyes were used. Many of the blankets were so closely woven as to be rainproof when worn as a poncho, and this type of blanket is frequently referred to in the letters and reports of early Army officers.

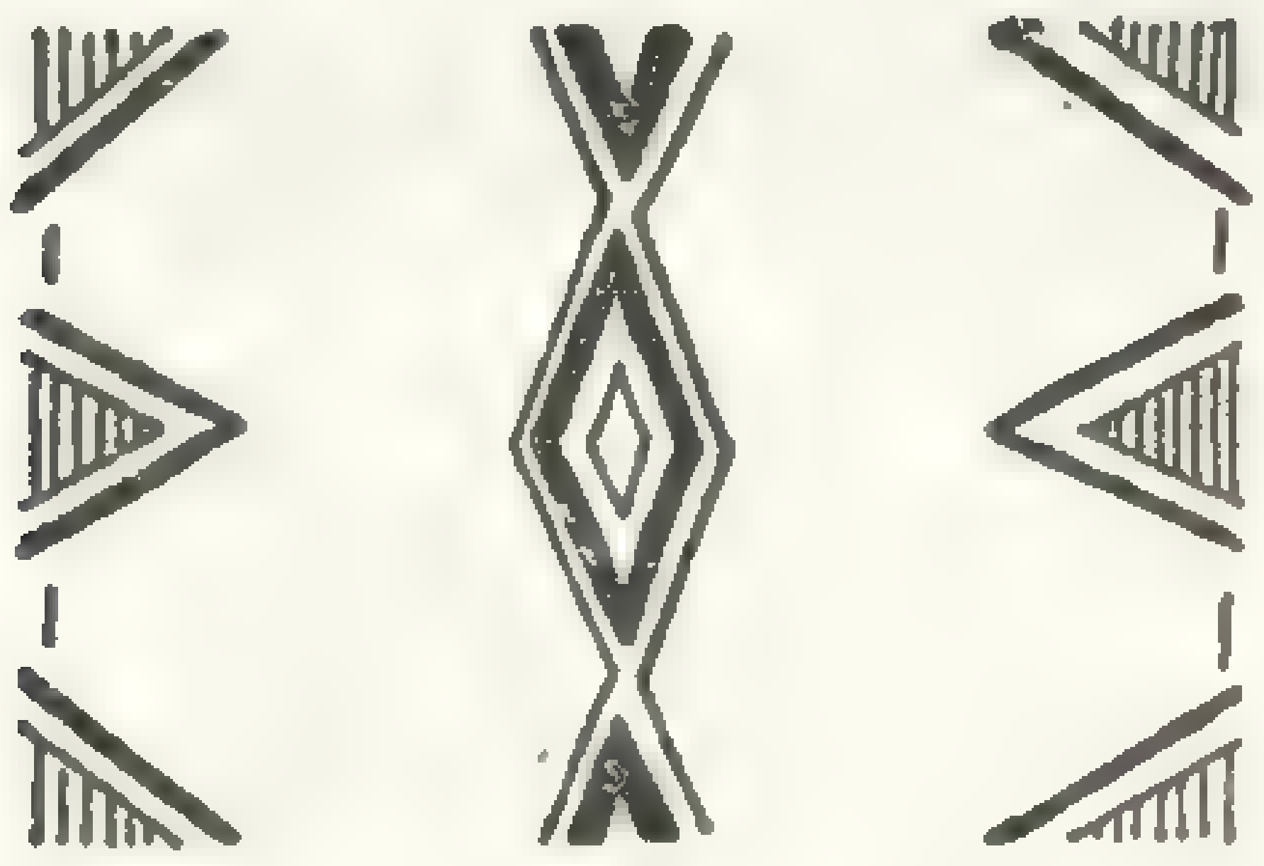
The patterns of the old blankets are distinctive in that the design runs completely across the blanket without edge or border. The modern designs, showing a pseudo-oriental pattern with a wide continuous border, lie entirely outside the true tradition of Navajo design and have been produced under the white man's influence.

THE texture of the modern weaving has also been changed by the white man. Whereas the old blankets were soft and light as already mentioned, the modern *rugs* (in contradistinction to *blankets*) are hard and stiff. The fact that the present day weaving consists almost entirely of floor coverings has, together with the use of cheap package dyes, produced an unfortunate change in color. Instead of the warm, soft colors of the older blankets, the modern rug usually shows a preponderance of cold steel gray, made by carding black and white wool together, with black and a very deep muddy maroon. Other colors—reds, yellows, etc., in which aniline dyes are used—also lack beauty.

A fact not very generally known is that there are as many as ten different Navajo weaves. One trader I know has a set of small looms which shows the different set-ups for the various weavers.







Recently a definite effort has been made by several traders to create an interest among the weavers in their respective districts in reproducing the old patterns and colors. Some of them have been very successful.

I am enclosing a few sketches, illustrating several of the older types of design.

—MARGARET McKITTRICK,
Field Investigator, Eastern and New
Mexico Association on Indian Affairs.

And a note on Indian tanned moccasins:

Cobalt, Ontario

Re Sterling Beeson's, Toledo, Ohio, enquiry for Indian tanned moccasins.

If the "noble red man" of the United States has become civilized and no longer tans his deer skin, it is not so in this north country. Moccasins such as Mr. Beeson asks for may be obtained in hundreds of places in northern Ontario, or northern Quebec.

Write to Jim Burns, Penneterre, Quebec. Only a month ago he had at least a hundred pairs of Indian made and tanned moccasins running from 75c to $2.00 a pair.

Any of the northern posts of the Hudson's Bay Company stock all sorts of them—plain and beaded. The most expensive beaded would not run $5 a pair.

—E. J. HOLLAND

ANOTHER great industry claims Paul Bunyan. And who shall say the following evidence is not conclusive?

Los Angeles, California

Have read with some interest the Paul Bunyan articles by Mr. Harris and Mr. Archie. And am writing this in case there should be some who do not know the true history of Paul Bunyan and Babe, the old Blue Ox.

As all dirt movers know, Paul Bunyan in his youth and prime followed the construction game. It was only when he saw that Babe was getting too old to work every day that he cast about for lighter work, and so I hear, went into the Woods.

It was the winter that the glaciers melted that Babe showed the first signs of age. Paul had to dig the Mississippi River in record time to drain the country. He worked twenty-five hours a day on this job (worked noon hour) instead of the usual twenty-four.

AS THESE glaciers had melted overnight, some say from Babe blowing his breath on them, there was a wall of water over two miles high rushing toward the gulf. And Paul had to dig a canal ahead of it to prevent its ruining the country. It was by prying out slabs of bed rock about the present width of the river and ten miles long, being careful not to spill the dirt off the top of the rock, and using these slabs as sledges to which he hitched Babe that he made his record breaking yardage.

But even at that, the water was about to catch them when they had a third of the way to go yet. Now Paul Bunyan always lost his temper when things didn't go right, proving him to be a true dirt mover, and fell to throwing rocks and handsful of clay, about the size of hills, out of the cut. Babe, becoming excited at all this, began to paw, throwing the dirt two looks and a holler farther than Paul. And in this manner they continued down to New Orleans, beating the water by three minutes and five seconds flat.

BUT he was never pleased with the job. He had started out building his dump nicely level on top and with smooth slopes, and all that had been spoiled by the muck he and Babe had pawed and thrown in the later part of the work. It ran from way north in Canada to way south in Mexico, and Paul had intended to name it the Great Dike but had to call it the Rocky Mountains instead from its being so rough.

Babe, the old Blue Ox, was the finest ox ever yoked, taking at one stride a distance a foot longer than a rope. And when Babe began to fail, as stated above, Paul Bunyan hunted easier work. And I for one claim it is no disgrace for an old man to work in the Woods or drill oil-wells either. Though some who knew him only in his old age seem to doubt his earlier exploits.

Some even doubting that he dug the Pacific Ocean. But if he didn't, who did?

—PAUL R. JACOBS

* * *

PROBABLY more than a few of you, like Mr. Evans in the following letter, have wondered about the sources of the Paul Bunyan legend:

Norman, Oklahoma

What was the real origin of the Paul Bunyan stories? Certainly the Paul Bunyan character was unknown among the Michigan lumbermen during the time the Michigan forests were being cut.

I was born in a log cabin in the woods about thirty miles north of Muskegon, Michigan, in 1878. At that time there were logging camps on all sides of us within a few miles, and until I was thirty years old I hardly knew a person who was not connected with lumbering in some way. At one time I lived for several weeks in the same boarding house with a big crew of river drivers, some of whom were old neighbors I had known all my life. Later I helped survey for some of the big lumber companies of northern Michigan. At another time I was foreman of a construction crew made up of lumberjacks. From 1906 to 1909 I was Superintendent of Schools in lumber towns of northern Michigan. In all that time I never heard the name of Paul Bunyan mentioned.

I think I heard a few stories of the Paul Bunyan type but not many. During the last two or three years I have made inquiry among old lumbermen of my acquaintance, who are not magazine readers, and none of them ever heard of Paul Bunyan. Consequently, it has always seemed to me that Paul Bunyan as a legendary lumberwoods character is pure "bunk."

Certainly the stories are of rather recent origin. Were they originated by some lumberjack with literary talents and added to as they were retold or did they originate with some story writer and spread to the woods since the beginning of the magazine reading era? In my day, magazines were unknown in the camps. As I understand it, Mr. Stevens has only collected the stories and I do not know what he thinks as to their origin.

—O. F. EVANS,
Ass't. Prof. of Geology, Univ. of Oklahoma.

Here is what James Stevens has to say about it:

Detroit, Michigan

It is by no means unusual to find old lumbermen who were unfamiliar with the name of Paul Bunyan in the early days of Michigan and Wisconsin logging. Recently I read the reminiscences of John Emmett Nelligan, whose name is no doubt familiar to Mr. Evans, and he likewise protests that he heard no Bunyan stories in the seventies and eighties, when he had many logging jobs in Michigan's upper peninsula.

I doubt, however, that either Mr. Nelligan or Mr. Evans could have gone to the woods in the Saginaw Valley or anywhere along the Lake Huron shore in that period without encountering the names of Paul and the Blue Ox. In Bay City and other centers I met many trustworthy witnesses who affirmed that they had heard the tales in the bunk shanties of sixty years ago. Clark Ring, the chief banker of the city of Saginaw, is one. He particularly remembered one camp bard on Thunder Bay River who continued one narrative of the adventures of Paul Bunyan for fourteen nights. At the same time Len Day—in the late seventies and early eighties—was renowned on the upper Mississippi as a Bunyan bard. He was an ancient at the time, and one of the richest lumbermen of the region. It is a matter of record that in his eighty-fourth year he followed one of his drives and regaled the rivermen each night with Bunyan yarns.

I HOPE that I may some time get into the home country of Papineau in Canada and dig up documentary evidence that the original Paul Bunyan was a hero of the rebellion of 1837. Old *habitants* have assured me that this is a fact. Victor Shawe, who used to write logging stories for the *Post*, also found evidence that led him to the same conclusion. This was before my first Bunyan book appeared, so Shawe was uninfluenced by my notions.

There is also internal evidence in the body of Bunyan stories which indicates a French-Canadian origin. My prowling through the old Saginaw country convinced me finally that the stories as we know them were first told in that region by French-Canadian lumberjacks and were later built up by the Irish immigrants who swarmed to the Michigan woods from 1850 on. They were the original "shanty boys." From them, and in the Saginaw country, stemmed such ballads as "Jack Haggerty" and "The Jam on Gerry's Rock". These old songs are all Irish in melody and form.

THE Paul Bunyan stories are unquestionably authentic folklore. But there is also no doubt that there were many lumbering regions where the yarns were untold. The bards who could hold a bunk shanty audience were rare.

The same thing is true of the Jim Bridger whoppers in the Far West. In Army reports, in Parkman's history and in many other documents there is a record of Bridger and other mountain men elaborating superb lies into yarns long-drawn-out. One may still hear them in the West. On the other hand, there are many old-timers of the mountains and plains who have never heard of them.

—JAMES STEVENS

Adventure
H·R·

Ask Adventure

For free information and services you can't get elsewhere

West

HORSES and hackamores.

Request:—1. "I am interested in cow horses, and would like to get some information on the breaking and training of a cow horse, also how to break and train a roping horse.

2. I would also like to know all about the hackamore, its uses and system. How do you fix the rope McCarte on a hackamore?"

—CHESTER COFFEE, Santa Cruz, California

Reply, by Mr. Thomas H. Dameron:—1. Training cow horses covers so much ground I could not undertake even to start it in a letter. However, the early training should be the same as for any riding horse. The Government publishes a pamphlet on breaking colts. Write to the Superintendent of Public Documents, Government Printing Office, Washington, D. C., and ask for price list No. 38, which is free. It will list the pamphlet mentioned, and others of interest.

Jesse Berry, Pleasant Hill, Ohio, puts out a complete course on horsemanship, which is well worth the fifteen dollars asked for it.

I use several methods to rope break a horse. Sometimes I put him in a corral with my rope tied to the horn of his saddle, run the rope through the fence to a horse I am riding, and when I pull the rope he soon learns to brace against it. Sometimes I ride him and put a helper on the horse outside. Sometimes I work with my helper in the open. Always be careful to have your rope so you can loosen it quickly. Never let a lesson last more than fifteen minutes. When your horse learns to brace against the rope when he sees it tighten, use him on some calves and light stuff before you tackle a man sized steer.

2. All about the hackamore is again a large sized question. Generally speaking, a nose band, a backamore, or a basal used instead of a bit is called a hackamore. A hackamore complete with head stall and Theodore usually has a latigo leather headpiece, throat latch, and cheek pieces, a nose band, and Theodore, which is a rope or braided leather band around the neck fastening to the nose band, so that in pulling the reins you tighten the neck piece and pull on the nose band, which flexes the jaw and neck.

The rope McCarte is simply a rope, generally braided and of horsehair, which can be fastened either to the Theodore or to the nose band separately.

The knots are all simple, but hard to explain. You can buy a complete outfit, or perhaps you can find one among your associates to use as a pattern and you can rig one for yourself without any trouble.

Many riders out here now use a cold jawed or backamore bit in place of the hackamore.

South America

TROPICAL prospecting requires good legs, the stomach of an ostrich, the ability to sleep in lonesome spots without getting nervous—and a whole passel of hope.

Request:—"How much money would it take to outfit a man for a prospecting trip of some duration in tropical South America."—LEONARD MACDONELL, Vancouver, British Columbia

Reply, by Mr. Edgar Young:—With $500 and more you can live for an indefinite period on the beach of a tropical country. A shack would cost about $30, and in good game and fishing country you could do some Robinson Crusoe stuff. I imagine, however, that you are bitten (as I am) with civilization's bug to get along, make money, etc., and could not spare the time.

Outfitting for a prospecting trip costs very little. It's a matter of old clothes, a gold pan (worth a dollar), pick and shovel, a sack of beans and some sowbelly, coffee, flour, etc. A man who knows the racket can prospect for a long time on very few dollars. A friend of mine is working a placer gold deposit at El Bordo, Colombia, and there might be some other likely spots in that vicinity. Being out there in B. C., you ought to know the rudiments of the game (I met several in your province) or should be able to get hold of one long enough to get the lowdown on the thing. The main things required for success in the prospecting game are a weak mind, good legs, the stomach of an ostrich, the ability to sleep in lonesome spots on the ground without getting nervous, and a whole passel of hope in the old heart and head all the time.

Salvage

AN OLD French law that comes to mind in connection with the *Egypt*.

Request:—"I am desirous of obtaining an opinion as to what claim the French government has on the salvaging of the lost ship *Egypt*, which I understand is to be raised for its treasure."
—FRED H. MAGRUDER, Washington, D. C.

Reply, by Lt. Harry E. Rieseberg:—In answer to your letter in which you request information as to the claim which the French government might have on the salvage of treasure of the *Egypt*, which sank off Ushant in 1922, should the vessel be brought to the surface, I wish to advise as follows:

Apparently, under a law first enacted in 1543 and subsequently modified but never repealed, France can claim two-thirds of any treasure trove recovered from a wreck in her territorial waters if one year has elapsed since the sinking of the vessel. The belief that success in raising the *Egypt's* treasure is near at hand lends point to this story, for the underwriters have been contemplating the possibility of a substantial recovery in respect of the loss which they settled nine years ago. There is no precedent in modern times for any abrogation of the rights of underwriters to subject matter in respect of which they have paid a total loss.

Even although the Dutch government claimed salvage from the *Lutine* which was sunk in 1799, the King of Holland voluntarily abandoned his claim in 1823.

Whether the French government is likely to attempt to enforce a claim under the ancient law is, however, unlikely to be tested in connection with any salvage from the *Egypt*, for it is stated on good authority that the wreck lies well outside French territorial waters, and therefore outside the jurisdiction of the French courts.

Basketball

FREE throws and long shots.

Request:—"1. How are the men placed for the foul, or free, throw?

2. How should the feet be placed for the medium and long shots for basket?"
—HARRY L. SIEVERS, Iowa City, Iowa

Reply, by Mr. I. S. Rose:—1. On foul throws we place the two largest men on free throw lines to recover the ball if missed. A man, usually the shooter's opponent, is placed at the end of the free throw line, just where the circle begins, and it is his duty to cut in front of the thrower, after the ball has arrived at the basket, and see that he does not recover the ball if missed.

2. Medium or long shots are taken either with the feet together or one foot in advance of the other, whichever position is more natural.

Balkans

WEATHER, highways, frontiers and motor-camping.

Request:—"I am planning some work for next July which will necessitate my traveling by auto through Jugo-Slavia and Greece. These countries are unfamiliar to me, hence my appeal to you.

It will be necessary for me to submit an estimate of my probable expenses, but before I can do so I will need to know the approximate mileage, cost of gas and oil and have some idea of the cost of living. If you could help me in this I would be very grateful.

I have doped out a probable route which would take me through the following towns or cities:

Vienna, Gratz, Belgrade, and then either to Sofia or to Salonika and on to Constantinople.

Can you tell me if there are suitable motor roads linking up these cities. Or whether I would experience any difficulty with a car between Vienna and Constantinople?

Also I would like to know an average cost of hotels and some idea of cost of living, also cost of gas and oil (average). And also if the climatic conditions about that time of the year would be likely to have any deterrent effect?

I am a British subject and have a passport issued to me by the Australian Commonwealth. I will be taking my wife with me and our car is equipped for camping out. This we will do if we so desire. If you can give us any information which may forestall any difficulties and assist us, I will be much obliged to you."

—TREVOR TUCKFIELD, Grande Prairie, Alberta

Reply, by Capt. W. W. Jenna:—You are to be envied your opportunity of making such an extended trip through the Balkans and I am sure that you will enjoy it. You will see some country over there that will compare favorably with your most rugged Canadian country, I am sure.

Now, first of all, the matter of mileage. You can go between all the big cities by car. The roads in the main are fair. You must expect, however, to strike many a bad road and don't expect to find all the Balkan roads like your main Canadian highways or you will be grievously disappointed. From Vienna to Gratz is about 150 miles, from Gratz to Belgrade about 400. From Belgrade to Sofia is about 275 and from Belgrade to Salonika about 335. From Salonika to Constantinople about 400 going by the way of Serres, Drama, Cavalla and Adrianople. From Sofia to Constantinople is about 350 miles. From Salonika to Athens about 350. Ordinarily a person going into a country for any length of time is required to make a deposit on his car. This deposit is forfeit if he leaves the car in the country, but is returned to him if he takes the car out with him. In your case, since you are merely passing through these countries, you will probably not have to make that deposit, but will be provided with papers which you will have to display at the border.

Hotels in southern Europe are cheaper than they are in the States or Canada. Living in general is cheaper. Your main item of expense will be the fuel and oil for your car. You will find that it is much more expensive to run a car over there than it is around your own home. I can not tell you definitely the cost of gas and oil over there, but it will average, I dare say, twice as much as it does here.

You will have to carry a passport and have it visaed for each country that you enter. That will be quite an item of expense too. You can figure on about ten dollars for each visa which you procure and have your passport checked by your authorities before you start, for if it is not in order when you arrive, there will be numberless obstacles and difficulties to be overcome before you can proceed on your trip. That not only takes a lot of time, but it is extremely wearing on one's good nature and yet there is nothing to be done other than have it put in order. So be sure that your passport is carefully checked before you start.

At each border you will be required to pass the customs inspections. These usually depend to a great extent on the humor of the customs officials at the time and place. In any event, it is always well to remember that they hold the authority and it is excellent policy to humor them along rather than try to buck against them.

Personally, I would not do any camping anywhere around the Balkans. That country is far different from yours and mine. If I were making your trip, I would figure to be at some hotel each night. You will be much more comfortable and secure—not that there might be any great danger connected with camping, but why take a chance?

As for the climatic conditions at the time of your trip, I think that they will be no deterrent. In the mountainous parts you will find it very cold and as you get further south you will find the weather just as hot as it was the opposite in the mountains. In Jugo-Slavia and Greece it is quite dry about that time.

Skunk

REMOVE the pelt with discretion and a sharp knife.

Request:—"Would you please explain to me just how to go about skinning a skunk without having to bury my clothes afterward?"

—ELMO HARDY, Spanish Park, Utah

Reply, by Mr. Seth Bullock:—There is, of course, a certain amount of odor that you can not get away from. However, if care is exercised so as not to cut the perfume sac which lies at the base of the tail, you should have no trouble. Ordinary care will do the trick. If you use a sharp knife and are careful about cutting, you should not have to bury your clothes.

Archery

YEW—the wood that put England on the map. Hickory—tough, but soon loses its snap. Some of the better arrow woods . . .

Request:—"Will you fully explain and describe the following kinds of wood and their bow-making qualities? (a) Yew; (b) Osage Orange; (c) Snakewood; (d) Greenheart; (e) Lemonwood; (f) Lancewood; (g) hickory.

2. Name some of the best arrow woods."

—JOHN HALBEGGER, Little Ferry, New Jersey

Reply, by Mr. Earl B. Powell:—1. (a) Yew is found in various parts of Europe, Asia, and Western U. S., Mexico, Florida, etc. Characterized by having reddish elastic heart wood, white sap, reddish purple bark and is an evergreen. Very good shooting and light in weight, but badly affected by heat. It is literally the wood that put England on the map as a nation—the stories of Robin Hood, William of Cloudesley, and others being too well known to repeat here.

(b) Osage Orange, the well known "hedge" wood, is of varying shades of yellow, with a rough bark, thorny, and bears a useless part resembling a big orange. The most durable and reliable wood known for a hunting bow supreme. Highly valued by Indians and in the old days you could trade a bow for a string of ponies—or a wife.

(c) Snakewood. Most beautiful bow wood known, pinkish mottled with brown spots. Very snappy, but unpleasant to shoot; hard to work and generally unreliable.

(d) Greenheart is an olive, drab colored wood, mean to work, harsh to shoot, and unreliable. A few years ago a certain dealer was charging $1.00 a stave for this wood, calling it "Whalebone Greenheart." Really, it is a very cheap wood, and not worth much as a bow wood. Bethobarr or Washaba is practically the same wood.

(e) Lemonwood, also known as degame, is a hard yellow wood resembling boxwood. 95 per cent. of the commercial bows are made of this wood. It is cheap and at the same time makes a good bow. Its ease of working and general good qualities make for its almost universal use.

(f) Lancewood is similar to Lemonwood, but not so pleasant to shoot. It also is apt to fly all to pieces when shot.

(g) Hickory. Allow me to once and for all time inform you that hickory is one of the poorest of all bow woods. It is true that it is the toughest wood—but it loses its snap after a few hundred shots, and is literally worthless.

2. There are about 50 kinds of bow woods to one good arrow wood. The best woods for arrows are Port Oxford cedar, fir, spruce, and Norway pine. These are made in "self" (one-piece) and "footed" arrows (two pieces of softer wood set in harder wood like a pool cue). Woods most used for "footings" are beefwood, Amaranth, Pernambuco, and a few others. Wood most used for hunting arrows is white birch. Bamboo is used for flight arrows (to get distance).

The South Sea Islands are now covered by Mr. William McCreadie, "Cardross", Suva, Fiji—and Southeastern Quebec by Mr. William MacMillan of 24 Plessis St., Quebec, Canada. Please note in the list of experts, in the next issue, that Canadian postage is 3 cents and Fiji postage 5 cents; most foreign postage is now also 5 cents. Proper postage for reply *must* be enclosed with all queries.

The Northwestern section is still vacant. Readers who feel that they are fully qualified to cover Washington and Oregon should state their qualifications by letter to the Managing Editor, *Adventure*, 161 Sixth Avenue, New York City.

Our Experts—They have been chosen by us not only for their knowledge and experience but with an eye to their integrity and reliability. We have emphatically assured each of them that his advice or information is not to be affected in any way by whether a commodity is or is not advertised in this magazine.

They will in all cases answer to the best of their ability, using their own discretion in all matters pertaining to their sections, subject only to our general rules for "Ask Adventure," but neither they nor the magazine assume any responsibility beyond the moral one of trying to do the best that is possible.

1. **Service**—It is free to anybody, provided self-addressed envelope and *full* postage, *not attached*, are enclosed. Correspondents writing to or from foreign countries will please enclose International Reply Coupons, purchasable at any post-office, and exchangeable for stamps of any country in the International Postal Union. Be sure that the issuing office stamps the coupon in the left-hand circle.
2. **Where to Send**—Send each question direct to the expert in charge of the particular section whose field covers it. He will reply by mail. **DO NOT** send questions to this magazine.
3. **Extent of Service**—No reply will be made to requests for partners, for financial backing, or for chances to join expeditions. "Ask Adventure" covers business and work opportunities, but only if they are outdoor activities, and only in the way of general data and advice. It is in no sense an employment bureau.
4. **Be Definite**—Explain your case sufficiently to guide the expert you question.

A complete list of the "Ask Adventure" experts appears in the issue of the fifteenth of each month

THE TRAIL AHEAD—THE NEXT ISSUE OF *ADVENTURE*, FEBRUARY 15th

Beginning a great South Seas novel by a master writer of the sea. The story of a brutal ship's captain who dreamed of hammering a modern Paradise out of a forlorn isle in the Fijis.

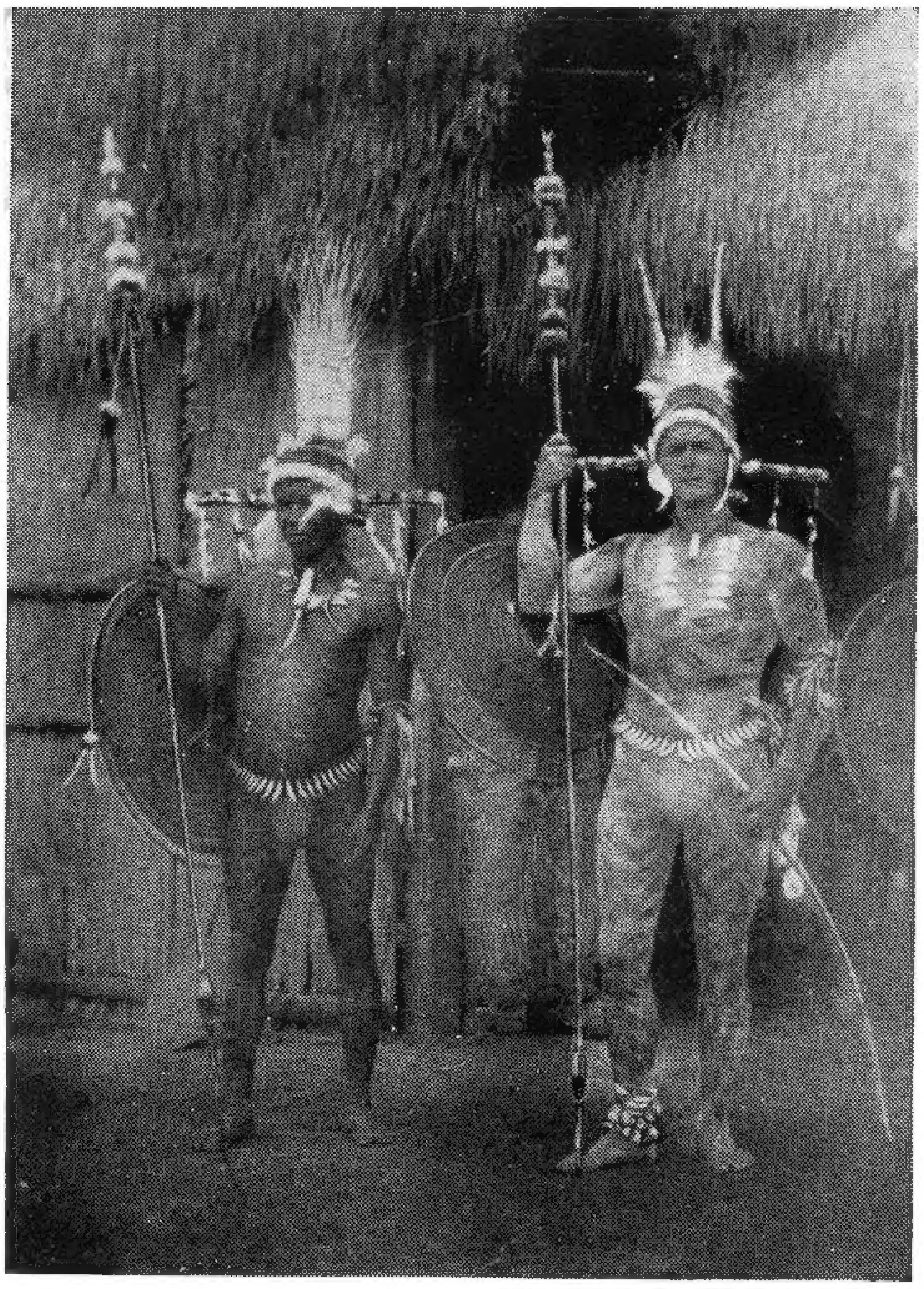
FLENCHER'S ISLAND

By CAPTAIN DINGLE

And—These Other Fine Stories

THE DRUMS OF NAKWI, a novelette of the Slave Coast, by ROBERT SIMPSON; CAPTAIN HARNIGAN, a story of the Civil War, by GORDON YOUNG; SEA AND SAND, a story of the ill-fated crew of the notorious German cruiser *Emden*, by CLAUDE FARRÈRE and PAUL CHACK; SITTING BULL, the concluding article on the mighty warrior-chief of the Sioux, by STANLEY VESTAL; THE TEAKWOOD CHEST, a story of the whaling men, by FREDERICK HOPKINS; BARREL 'EM AND BEND 'EM, a story of the speedway, by T. R. ELLIS; BURGUNDY FOR BREAKFAST, a story of old New Orleans and Jean Lafitte, by DONALD BARR CHIDSEY; and the conclusion of SMOKY PASS, a novel of the Klondike gold rush, by AUBREY BOYD.

THIS MAN



GORDON MacCREAGH

Author of "Black Waters and White"

Is well known to YOU, though you never thought to see him in the regalia that the camera has caught. "Its occasion", writes Gordon MacCreagh, "was the great caapi ceremony of the Tiquie Tucana Indians of the Amazon Basin. When they are going to war or whenever they are going to have a big ghost dance and fight off their devil-devil, jurupari they call him; in fact, whenever they are going to do anything that requires great courage they do a three days' ceremony involving a lot of medicine man hokum and this final course of caapi drinking, the drink that 'makes men brave'. So me too, I drank caapi and beat a drum and howled and leapt around". The story of his own wanderings are even more amazing than the yarns he spins. India . . Africa . . the Malay States . . the King of Abyssinia made him a Chevalier of the Star of Ethiopia. All of which serves to show why his stories are so full of realism, for he is describing realities that he knows so well. YOU and WE know Gordon MacCreagh and his absorbing tales in *Adventure* and look forward to his next one with all the eagerness of the real initiate of the Camp-fire.

There is a FRIEND of yours . . may be he lives next door, or a block away, or in the next town . . who hasn't a ghost of a notion why your nose goes into each new copy of ADVENTURE and stays put. Write his name and address below, tear off the coupon and mail to ADVENTURE, 161 Sixth Avenue, New York, N. Y. and we will initiate him into our circle with a free copy.

• • •

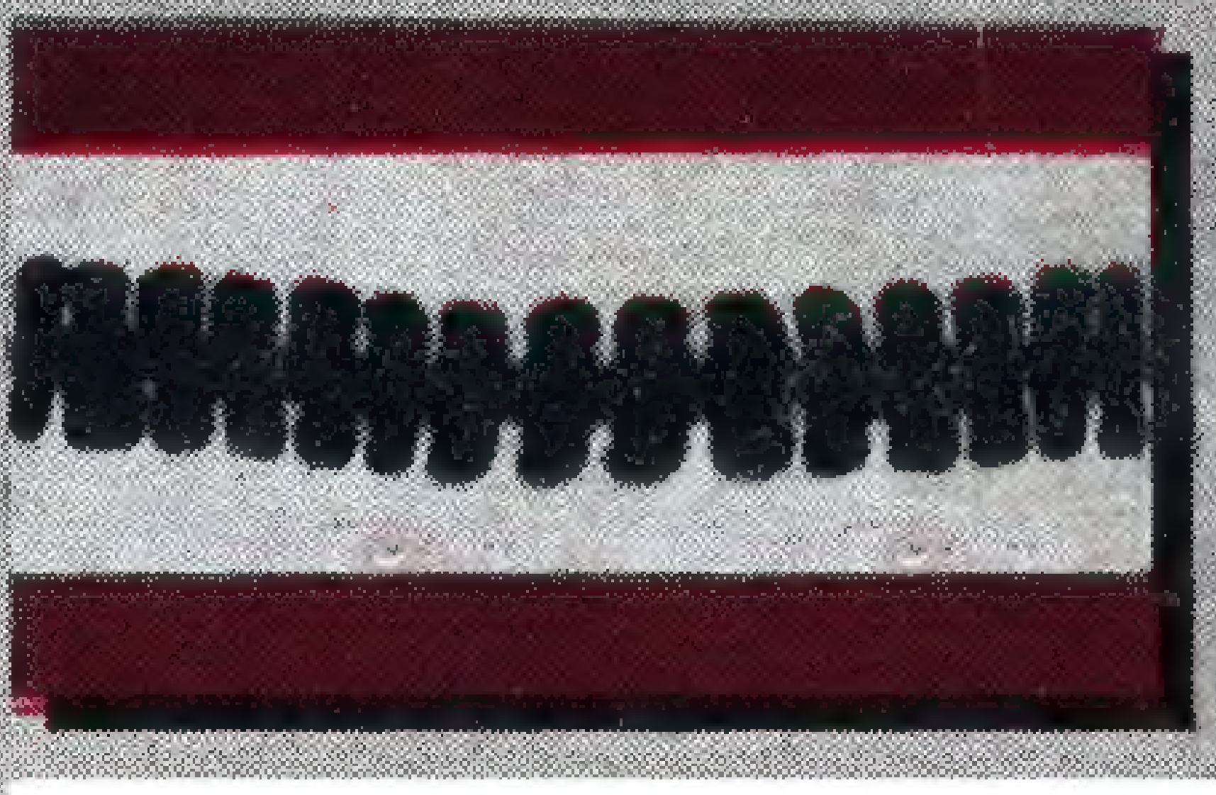
Name ____

Address ______________________________________

Adventure

AC-32

It's how a laxative WORKS that's important!



Section of a Nor[redacted]
From an actual X-ray photograph, showing how the peristaltic muscles constantly knead and churn, eliminating waste matter from the system.

When Nature needs help, the right laxative should mildly stimulate the bowel muscles so that they do their work normally. Ex-Lax simply gives a gentle "nudge" and proper function is resumed.

The Danger of Violent Cathartics
Chronic constipation creates a distended condition of the intestines, as shown above. This results in loss of muscle "tone." Repeated abuse with violent cathartics may further impair the action of these already overstretched muscles by submerging their latent impulse to respond to milder, gentler stimuli, thus doing more harm than good.

More important than mere *results*, your doctor will tell you, is *how* a laxative works inside your body.

Nature has given you a mechanism for the elimination of food waste. Day and night, the "peristalsis" of the bowel muscles, churning and kneading ceaselessly, performs this vital task. When you are constipated it simply means the intestines have been obstructed. They've stopped moving, temporarily.

Beware of laxatives that do this!

Wrong laxatives violate the essential law of "peristaltic action." The food is forced through the intestines in utter disregard of the normal action of the bowel muscles. Such laxatives get results—but at the cost of digestion and general health.

Avoid this danger! Choose a laxative that *gently* helps the bowel muscles to do their work naturally. Choose Ex-Lax!

The doctor approves of the way Ex-Lax works. He knows that its scientific ingredient, phenolphthalein, acts gently—not violently—on the intestinal muscles, merely giving them a slight "nudge" when normal action is delayed.

The doctor knows that Ex-Lax does not *rush* the food through your system before it is properly assimilated. The doctor knows that the scientific Ex-Lax formula combines phenolphthalein with a delicious chocolated base—in just the right proportion, the right quality, the right dose—to produce best and safest results.

The doctor knows too, that Ex-Lax is absolutely safe and effective for young and old alike. Today Ex-Lax is one of the world's leading laxatives.

Checks on every point the doctor looks for

SAFE ✓	DOESN'T CAUSE HABIT ✓
GENTLE ✓	NOT ABSORBED BY SYSTEM ✓
EASY TO TAKE ✓	NO EMBARRASSMENT ✓
THOROUGH ✓	DOES NOT UPSET DIGESTION ✓

Get natural relief tonight!

Try Ex-Lax this very night! At all druggists—10c, 25c and 50c. Or mail this coupon for a free trial sample.

© 1932

Keep "regular" with *Safe* EX-LAX

THE CHOCOLATED LAXATIVE

FREE SAMPLE COUPON

Ex-Lax, Inc., P. O. Box 170 Y 12
Times-Plaza Station, Brooklyn, N. Y.

Kindly send me the free sample of Ex-Lax.

Name..

Address..

City.............................. *State*..............